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# NOTES

ON

## THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

BY

RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH, D.D.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER.

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## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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CONCERNING the references and quotations which appear in the present volume, I may, perhaps, be permitted to say that, such as they are, they are in the main of my own collecting. I was struck, on referring to the works bearing on my subject, with the large amount of merely traditional materials which they contained\*—the same quotations from the Fathers of the Church,—the same illustrations from classical authors,—the same passages from modern works on the East, and this while richest mines, especially in the instance of the first, remained still unwrought. As the only means of giving my book any value in this respect, I determined to use very sparingly those materials which I thus found ready to my hand, and rather to make an independent gathering of my own, however small it might prove, than thus to enter upon other men's labours. Where my quotations have been made at

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\* There are some remarkable exceptions, for instance, the very valuable commentary of Grotius on the Gospels; and Mr GRESWELL'S *Exposition of the Parables* is full, sometimes even to embarrassment, of deeply interesting materials, which have by him been brought to bear for the first time on the subject. I have only not oftener availed myself of the great learning of his book, because I have naturally assumed it to be in the hands of very many, and within the reach of all my readers.

second hand, I have very frequently noted the channel through which I derived them, and if possible, seen with my own eyes the passage quoted or referred to, as one soon learns how often men, without meaning to be untrue, will yet lay greater weight on a passage than it will justly bear, or will give a maimed or partial account of their author's meaning. This, however, from the limited supply of books which I have had at command, has not in every case been possible. In other respects also I have conscientiously striven to be accurate, which no one knows the difficulty of being, till he has earnestly made the attempt. Such as it is, I must now send forth the book, of which I am myself most painfully conscious of the many deficiencies, even as I am not without dread that many errors may be found in it, yet nothing, I trust, contrary to the doctrine of Scripture, and the faith of the Church;—but which I also know has not been hastily composed, nor without some portion of diligent labour,—nor yet without many prayers that a blessing from above might rest upon it.

BOTLEY HILL,

*Dec 7, 1840*





# NOTES

ON

THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD.



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# INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE DEFINITION OF THE PARABLE.

THOSE writers who have had occasion to define a parable\* have found it no easy task to give such a satisfying definition as should omit none of its distinctive marks, and yet at the same time should include nothing that was superfluous and merely accidental. Rather than attempt to add another to the many definitions already given,† I will seek to note

\* Παραβολή, from παραβάλλειν, projicere, obicere, *εἰς τὴν τινί*, to put forth one thing before or beside another, and it is often assumed, though not necessarily included in the word, that the purpose for which they are set side by side is, that they may be compared one with the other, thus Plato (*Phil* 33 B)· παραβολή τῶν βίων, and Polybius (1 2 2). παραβολή καὶ σύγκρισις. In this way we arrive at that technical use of παραβολή which we find in Scripture. This use of the word is not, however, peculiar to sacred Greek; for we meet it in Aristotle (*Rhet* 2 20), and in Longinus (παραβολαὶ καὶ εἰκόνες, 37). At the same time that the notion of comparison is not necessarily included in the word is clear, not only from the derivation, but from the fact that it, and the whole family of cognate words, as παράβολος, παραβόλος, parabolanus, are used in altogether a different sense, yet one growing out of the same root in which the notion of *putting forth* is retained, but it is no longer for the purpose of comparison, which is only the accident, not of the essence, of the word. Thus παράβολος, qui obijcit se presentissimo vitæ periculo, one who *exposes* his life, as those at Alexandria, called therefore *parabolani*, who buried infected corpses—The chief Latin writers are not agreed in their rendering of the word. Cicero (*De Inv Rhet* 1 30) represents it by collatio, Seneca (*Ep* 59) by imago; Quintilian (*Inst* 5 11. 8) by similitudo.

† Many from the Greek Fathers are to be found in *Sticer's Thes.* s. v. παραβολή. Jerome, on Mark iv, defines it thus: Sermonem utilem, sub idoneâ figurâ expressum, et in recessu continentem spiritualem

briefly what seems to me to difference it from the fable, the allegory, and such other forms of composition as are most nearly allied to, and most closely border upon it. In the process of thus distinguishing it from those forms of composition with which it is most likely to be confounded, and of justifying the distinction, something will have been said for the bringing out of its essential properties more clearly than in any other way I could hope to have done.

1. There are some who have confounded the parable with the *Æsopic fable*, or drawn only a slight and hardly perceptible line of distinction between the two; as for instance Lessing and Storr, who affirm that the fable relates an event as having actually taken place at a certain time, while the parable only assumes it as possible. But not to say that examples altogether fail to bear them out in this assertion, the difference is much more real, and far more deeply-seated, than this. The parable is constructed to set forth a truth spiritual and heavenly: this the fable, with all its value, is not. It is essentially of the earth, and never lifts itself above the earth. It never has a higher aim than to inculcate maxims of prudential morality, industry, caution, foresight; and these it will sometimes recommend even at the expense of the higher self-getting virtues. The fable just reaches that pitch of morality which the world will understand and approve. But it has no place in the Scripture,\* and in the nature of things could have

aliquam admonitionem and he calls it finely in another place (*Ad Algas*) quasi umbra prævia veritatis. Among the moderns, Unger (*De Parab. Jesu Natura*, p. 30): Parabola Jesu est collatio per narrationem fictam, sed verisimilem, sermo illustrans rem sublimiorem. Teelman: Parabola est similitudo a rebus communibus et obviis desumpta ad significandum quæquam spirituale et celeste. Bengel. Parabola est oratio, quæ per narrationem fictam, sed veræ similem, a rebus ad vitæ communis usum pertinentibus desumptam, veritates minus notas aut morales representat.

\* The two fables that are found in the Old Testament, that of the trees which would choose a king, (*Judg. ix. 8-15*), and the brief one of the thistle and cedar (*2 Km. : iv. 9*), may seem to impeach the universality of this rule, but do not so in fact. For in neither case is it God that is speaking, nor yet messengers of his, delivering his counsel; but men, and from an earthly standing-point, not a divine. Jotham

none, for the purpose of Scripture excludes it; that purpose being the awakening of man to a consciousness of a divine original, the education of the reason, and of all which is spiritual in man, and not, except incidentally, the sharpening of the understanding. For the purposes of the fable, which are the recommendation and enforcement of the prudential virtues, the regulation of that in man which is instinct in beasts, *in* itself a laudable discipline, but *by* itself leaving him only a subtler beast of the field,—for these purposes, examples and illustrations taken from the world beneath him are admirably suited.\* That world is therefore the haunt and the main region, though by no means the exclusive one, of the fable. Even when men are introduced, it is on the side by which they are connected with that lower world; while on the other hand, in the parable, the world of animals, though not wholly excluded, finds only admission in so far as it is related to man. The relation of beasts to one another not being spiritual, can supply no analogies, can be in no wise helpful for declaring the truths of the kingdom of God. But all man's relations to man are spiritual, many of his relations to the world beneath him are so also. His lordship over the animals, for instance, rests on his higher spiritual nature, is a dominion given to him from above; therefore, as in the instance of the shepherd and sheep (John x.), and elsewhere, it will serve to image forth deeper truths of the relation of God to man.

It belongs to this, the loftier standing-point of the parable, that it should be deeply earnest, allowing itself therefore in no jesting nor raillery at the weaknesses, the follies, or the crimes

seeks only to teach the men of Shechem their folly, not their sin, in making Abimelech king over them the fable never lifting itself to the rebuke of sin, as it is sin, this is beyond its region; but only in so far as it is also folly. And Jehoash, in the same way, would make Amaziah see his presumption and pride, in challenging him to the conflict, not thereby teaching him any moral lesson, but only giving evidence in the fable which he uttered, that his own pride was offended by the challenge of the Jewish king

\* The greatest of all fables, the *Reineke Fuchs*, affords ample illustration of all this; it is throughout a glorifying of cunning as the guide of life and the deliverer from all evil.

of men.\* Severe and indignant it may be, but it never jests at the calamities of men, however well deserved, and its indignation is that of holy love: while in this railery and in these bitter mockings the fabulist not unfrequently indulges;†—he rubs biting salt into the wounds of men's souls—it may be, perhaps it generally is, with a desire to heal those hurts, yet still in a very different spirit from that in which the affectionate Saviour of men poured oil and wine into the bleeding wounds of humanity.

And yet again, there is another point of difference between the parable and the fable. While it can never be said that the fabulist is regardless of truth, since it is neither his intention to deceive, when he attributes language and discourse of reason to trees, and birds, and beasts, nor is any one deceived by him; yet the severer reverence for truth, which is habitual

\* The definition by Phædrus of the fable squares with that here given:

Duplex libelli dos est, ut *risam* moveat,

Et quod *prudens* vitam consilio monet

† As finds place, for instance, in La Fontaine's celebrated fable,—*La Cigale ayant chanté tout l'été*,—in which the ant, in reply to the petition of the grasshopper which is starving in the winter, reminds it how it sung all the summer, and bids it to dance now. That fable, commending as it does foresight and prudence preparation against a day of need, might be compared for purposes of contrast to more than one parable using the same, as Matt xxv 1, Luke xvi 1, but with this mighty difference that the fabulist has only worldly needs in his eye, it is only against those that he urges to lay up by timely industry a sufficient store, while the Lord in his parables would have us to lay up for eternal life, for the day when not the bodies, but the souls that have nothing in store, will be naked, and hungry, and miserable,—to prepare for ourselves a reception into everlasting habitations. The image which the French fabulist uses was very well capable of such higher application had he been conscious of any such needs (see Prov. vi. 8, and on that verse, CORRIER, *Part Apost* vol. i. p. 104, note 13, and Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps lxxvi* 2). In Sandi's far nobler fable, *The Ant and the Nightingale*, from whence La Fontaine's is undoubtedly borrowed, such application is distinctly intimated. Von Hammer has in this view an interesting comparison between the French and the Persian fable (*Gesch. d. schön. Redek. Pers* p. 207). The fable with which Herodotus (i. 141) relates Cyrus to have answered the Ionian ambassadors, when they offered him a late submission, is another specimen of the bitter irony, of which this class of composition is often the vehicle.

to the higher moral teacher, will not allow him to indulge even in this sporting with the truth, this temporary suspension of its laws, though upon agreement, or at least with tacit understanding. In his mind, the creation of God, as it came from the Creator's hands, is too perfect, has too much of reverence owing to it, to be represented otherwise than as it really is. The great Teacher by parables, therefore, allowed himself in no transgression of the established laws of nature—in nothing marvellous or anomalous; He presents to us no speaking trees nor reasoning beasts,\* and we should be at once conscious of an unfitness in his so doing.

2. The parable is different from the *mythus*, inasmuch as in the *mythus* the truth and that which is only the vehicle of the truth are wholly blended together. and the consciousness that there is any distinction between them, that it is possible to separate the one from the other, belongs only to a later and more reflective age than that in which the *mythus* itself had birth, or those in which it was heartily believed. The mythic narrative presents itself not merely as the vehicle of the truth, but as itself being the truth: while in the parable, there is a perfect consciousness in all minds, of the distinctness between form and essence, shell and kernel, the precious vessel and yet more precious wine which it contains. There is also the *mythus* of another class, the artificial product of a later self-conscious age, of which many inimitable specimens are to be found in Plato, devised with the distinct

Klinckschmidt (*De Hom. Div. et Laz* p 2) Fabula aliquod vitæ communis morumque præceptum simpliciter et nonnunquam jocosâ oratione illustrat per exemplum plerumque contra veram naturam fictum: parabola autem sententiam sublimiorem (ad res divinas pertinentem) simpliciter quidem sed gravi et seriâ oratione illustrat per exemplum ita excogitatum ut cum rerum naturâ maxime convenire videatur. And Cicero (*De Invent* i 19): Fabula est in quâ nec verè nec verisimiles res continentur. But of the parable Origen says, "Ἔστι παραβολή, λόγος ὡς περὶ γινόμενον, μὴ γινόμενον μὲν κατὰ τὸ ῥητόν, δυναμένου δὲ γενέσθαι. There is, then, some reason for the fault which Calov finds with Grotius, though he is only too ready to find fault, for commonly using the terms *fabula* and *fabella* in speaking of our Lord's parables, terms which certainly have an unpleasant sound in the ear.



intention of embodying some important spiritual truth, of giving an outward subsistence to an idea. But these, while they have many points of resemblance with the parable, yet claim no credence for themselves either as actual or possible (in this differing from the parable), but only for the truth which they embody and declare. The same is the case when upon some old legend or myth that has long been current, there is thrust some spiritual significance, clearly by an after-thought; in which case it perishes in the letter that it may live in the spirit; all outward subsistence is denied to it, for the sake of asserting the idea which it is made to contain. To such a process, as is well known, the later Platonists submitted the old mythology of Greece. For instance, Narcissus falling in love with his own image in the water-brook, and pining there, was the symbol of man casting himself forth into the world of shows and appearances, and expecting to find the good that would answer to his nature there, but indeed finding only disappointment and death. It was their meaning hereby to vindicate that mythology from charges of absurdity or immorality, to put a moral life into it, whereby it should maintain its ground against the new life of Christianity; though, indeed, they were only thus hastening the destruction of whatever lingering faith in it there might yet survive in the minds of men.

3. The parable is also clearly distinguishable from the *proverb*,\* though it is true that, in a certain degree, the words are used interchangeably in the New Testament, and as equivalent the one to the other. Thus, "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv. 23), is termed a parable, being more strictly a proverb; so again, when the Lord had used that proverb, probably already familiar to his hearers,† "If the blind

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\* *Παροιμία*, that is, *παρ' ὁδόν*, a *trite*, *wayside* saying; or, as some have understood it, a saying *removed* from the ordinary *way*, an uncommon saying. Some derive it from *οἶμν*, a tale, or poem; yet Passow's explanation of the latter word shows that at the root the two derivations are the same. See SUICER'S *Thes.* s. v. *παροιμία*.

† It is current at least now in the East, as I find it in a collection of Turkish proverbs, in VON HAMMER'S *Morgenl. Kleeblatt*, p. 63.

lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch," Peter said, "Declare unto us this *parable*" (Matt. xv. 14, 15); and Luke v. 36 is a proverb or proverbial expression, rather than a parable, which name it bears. So, upon the other hand, those are called "proverbs" in St. John, which, if not strictly parables, yet claim much closer affinity to the parable than to the proverb, being in fact allegories: thus Christ's setting forth of his relations to his people under those of a shepherd to his sheep, is termed a "proverb," though our translators, holding fast to the sense rather than to the letter, have rendered it a "parable" (John x. 6: cf. xvi. 25, 29).<sup>\*</sup> It is easy to account for this interchange of the words. Partly it arose from one word in Hebrew signifying both parable and proverb;† which circumstance must have had considerable influence upon writers accustomed to think in that language, and is itself to be explained from the parable and proverb being alike enigmatical and somewhat obscure forms of speech, "dark sayings," uttering a part of their meaning, and leaving the rest to be inferred.‡ This is evident of the parable, and is not in fact less true of the proverb. For though such proverbs as have become the heritage of an entire people, and have obtained universal currency, may be, or rather may have become, plain enough; yet in themselves proverbs are very often enigmatical, claiming a quickness in detecting latent affinities, and not seldom a knowledge which shall enable to catch more or less remote allusions, for their right comprehension § And yet further to explain how the terms should

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\* The word *παραβολή* never occurs in St. John, nor *παροιμία* in the first three Evangelists.

† *למשל*. This is the word which the LXX. render *παροιμίας* in the title of that book which we also call *The Proverbs* of Solomon, while the same word is by them rendered *παραβολή* in other places, as at 1 Sam x 12, Ezek xvi 2. In *Ecclesiasticus* the two words more than once occur together: thus, xlvii. 17, *παροιμίας καὶ παραβολαῖς*: xxxix 3, *ἀπόκρυφα παροιμιῶν ἐν αἰνίγμασι παραβολῶν*.

‡ So we find our Saviour contrasts the speaking in proverbs or parables (John xvi. 25) with the speaking plainly (*παρόρησά, i. e. πᾶν ῥῆμα*, or every word).

§ For instance, to take two common Greek proverbs: *Χρύσεια*

be often indifferently used,—the proverb, though not necessarily, is yet very commonly, parabolical,\* that is, it rests upon some comparison either expressed or implied, as for example, 2 Pet. ii. 22. Or again, the proverb is often a concentrated parable; for instance, that one above quoted, “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch,” might evidently be extended with ease into a parable; and in like manner, not merely many proverbs might thus be beaten out into fables, but they are not unfrequently allusions to or summings up in a single phrase of some well-known fable.†

4. It only remains to consider wherein the parable differs from the *allegory*. This it does in form rather than in essence; in the allegory an interpenetration of the thing signifying and the thing signified finding place, the qualities and properties of the first being attributed to the last, and the two thus blended together, instead of being kept quite distinct, and placed side by side, as is the case in the parable.‡ Thus, John xv. 1-8, “I am the true vine, &c.,” is throughout an allegory, as there are two allegories scarcely kept apart from

χαλκείων would require some knowledge of the Homeric narrative; βούς ἐπὶ γλώσσης of Attic money. The obscurity that is in proverbs is evidenced by the fact of such books as the *Adagia* of Erasmus, in which he brings all his immense learning to bear on their elucidation, and yet leaves many with no satisfactory explanation. Cf. the *Pala-miographi Græci* (Oxf. 1836), pp. 11 16.

\* It is not necessarily, as some have affirmed, a λόγος ἐσχηματισμένος; for instance, Ἐχθρῶν ἄδωρα δῶρα, οἱ Γλυκὺς ἀπειρὸς πόλεμοι, and innumerable others, are expressed without figure, but very many are also parabolical, and generally the best, and those which have become most truly popular.

† Quintilian: Παροιμία tabella brevior, . . . parabola longius res quæ componentur repetere solet. On the distinction between the παραβολή and παροιμία, there are some good remarks in HASE's *Theol. Nov. Theol. Philology* vol. ii. p. 503.

‡ Thus TOWNE (*De Sac. Poes. Heb. Præl.* 10) His denique subjicienda est quasi lex quædam parabola, nimirum ut per omnia sibi constet, neque arcessitus proprium admista habeat. In quo multum differt a primâ allegoriæ specie quæ a simplici metaphora paulatim procedens, non semper continue excludit proprium, a propriis in translata paulatim illapsa, nec minus leniter ex translatis in propria per gradus quosdam se recipiens.

one another, John x. 1-16; the first, in which the Lord sets himself forth as the Door, the second, as the good Shepherd, of the sheep. So, "Behold the Lamb of God," is an allegorical,—“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,” a parabolical, expression.\* The allegory needs not, as the parable, an interpretation to be brought to it from without, since it contains its interpretation within itself; and, as the allegory proceeds, the interpretation proceeds hand in hand with it, or at least never falls far behind it.† And thus the allegory stands to the metaphor, as the more elaborate and long drawn out composition of the same kind, in the same relation that the parable does to the isolated comparison or simile. And as many proverbs are, as we have seen, concise parables, in like manner many also are brief allegories. For instance, the following, which is an Eastern proverb—"This world is a carcass, and they who gather round it are dogs,"—does in fact interpret itself as it goes along, and needs not, therefore, that an interpretation be brought to it from without; while it is otherwise with the proverb spoken by our Lord, "Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together;"—this gives no help to its own interpretation from within, and is a saying, of which the darkness and difficulty have been

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\* Thus, to illustrate this distinction by examples which Lowth has used, Isai. v. 1-6, is a parable, of which the explanation is separately given, ver. 7, while on the other hand, Ps. lxxx. 8-16, resting on the same image, is an allegory, since, for instance, the casting out of the *heathen*, that the *vine* might be planted, is an intermingling of the thing signifying and that signified, wherein the note that distinguishes the allegory from the parable consists, as Quintilian (*Inst.* viii. 3, 77) observes; for having defined the allegory, he proceeds: In omni autem παραβολῇ aut præcedit similitudo, res sequitur, aut præcedit res, similitudo sequitur: sed interm *libera et separata est*. The allegory, then, is *translatio*, the parable *collatio*.

† Of all this the *Pilgrim's Progress* affords ample illustration, "Interpreter" appearing there as one of the persons of the allegory. Mr. Hallam (*Liter. of Europe*, vol. iv. p. 553) mentions this as a certain drawback upon the book, that, "in his language, Bunyan sometimes mingles the signification too much with the fable, we might be perplexed between the imaginary and the real Christian;" but is not this of the very nature of the allegorical fable?

abundantly witnessed by the very different interpretations of it which have been proposed.

To sum up all, then, the parable differs from the fable, moving as it does in a spiritual world, and never transgressing the actual order of things natural—from the mythus, there being in the latter an unconscious blending of the deeper meaning with the outward symbol, the two remaining separate and separable in the parable—from the proverb, inasmuch as it is longer carried out, and not merely accidentally and occasionally, but necessarily figurative—from the allegory, comparing as it does one thing *with* another, but, at the same time, preserving them apart as an inner and an outer, and not transferring, as does the allegory, the properties and qualities and relations of one *to* the other. ¶

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## CHAPTER II.

### ON TEACHING BY PARABLES.

HOWEVER our Lord may on one or more occasions have made use of this manner of teaching by parables, with the intention of withdrawing from certain of his hearers the knowledge of truths, which they were unworthy or unfit to receive;\* yet we may assume as certain that his general aim†

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\* Macrobius (*Somn. Scip.* i. 2): *Figuris defendantibus a vilitate secretum*. No one can deny that this was sometimes the Lord's purpose, without doing great violence to his words, as recorded by the three first Evangelists (Matt. xiii. 10-15; Mark iv. 11, 12; Luke viii. 9, 10). And even if we could successfully deal with the *ἴρα* and the *μῆποτε* there, still the passage of Isaiah is in the way. Where would then be the fulfilment of his prophecy? There can be no doubt that the Prophet speaks of a *penal* blindness, a punishment of the foregoing sins of his people, and namely this punishment, that they should be unable to recognize what was divine in his mission and character; which prophecy had its crowning fulfilment, when the Jewish people were so darkened by previous carnal thoughts and works, that they could see no glory and no beauty in Christ, could recognize nothing of divine in the teaching or person of Him who was "God manifest in the flesh." It is not that by the command, "Make the heart of this people fat" (Isai. vi. 10), we need understand that any peculiar hardening then passed upon them; but that the Lord, having constituted as the righteous law of his moral government, that sin should produce darkness of heart and moral insensibility, declared that He would allow the law in their case to take its course, and so also with this latter generation: even as that law is declared in the latter half of Rom. 1 to have taken its course with the Gentile world: in Augustine's awful words, *Deus solus magnus, lege infatigabili spargens pœnales cæcitates super illicitas cupidines*. The fearful curse of sin is that it ever reproduces itself, that he who sows in sin reaps in spiritual darkness, which delivers him over again to worse sin:

For when we in our viciousness grow hard,  
Oh, misery on't, the wise gods seal our eyes,  
In our own filth drop our clear judgments, make us  
Adore our errors, laugh at us, while we strut  
To our confusion.

† Bacon has noted this double purpose of parables (*De Sap. Vet.*): *Duplex apud homines repertus est atque increbuit parabolarum usus, atque, quod magis mirum sit, ad contraria adhibetur. Faciunt enim parabolæ ad involucrium et velum, faciunt etiam ad lumen et illustra-*

was not different from that of others who have used this method of teaching, and who have desired thereby to make clearer,\* either to illustrate or to prove the truths which they had in hand:—I say either to illustrate or to prove; for the parable or other analogy to spiritual truth appropriated from the world of nature or man, is not merely illustration, but also in some sort proof. It is not merely that these analogies assist to make the truth intelligible, or, if intelligible before, present it more vividly to the mind, which is all that some will allow them.† Their power lies deeper than this, in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and which all deeper minds have delighted to trace, between the natural and spiritual worlds, so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations, happily but yet arbitrarily

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tionem See also *De Augm. Scient* ii. 13; and the remarkable passage from Stobæus, on the teaching of Pythagoras, quoted in Potter's edit. of Clemens Alexandrinus, p. 676, note.

\* This has been acknowledged on all sides, equally by profane and sacred writers; thus Quintilian (*Inst.* viii. 3. 72): *Præclare vero ad inferendam rebus lucem repertæ sunt similitudines.* And Seneca (*Ep* 59) styles them, *Imbecillitatis nostræ adminicula.* Again, they have been called *Mediæ scientiæ inter et ignorantiam.* The author of the treatise *ad Hercunum*: *Similitudo sumitur aut ornandi causâ aut probandi, aut apertius docendi, aut ante oculos ponendi.* Tertullian (*De Res. Car.* 33) expressly denies of parables, that they darken the light of the Gospel (*obumbrant Evangelii lucem*). See also the quotation from Chrysostom in Suicer's *Theas.* s. v. *παραβολή*, while Basil calls the parable *λόγος ὠφέλιμος μετ' ἐπικρύψεως μετρίας*, with that moderate degree of concealment which shall provoke, not such as shall repel or disappoint, inquiry. The Lord, says Chrysostom (*Hom.* 69 in *Matth.*), spoke in parables, *ἐρεθίζων καὶ διεγείρων*, or, as he expresses it elsewhere (*De Prec. Serm.* 2), that we might dive down into the deep sea of spiritual knowledge, from thence to fetch up pearls and precious stones. And Jeremy Taylor: "He taught them by parables, under which were hid mysterious senses, which shined through their veil, like a bright sun through an eye closed with a thin eyelid."

† So Stellini: *Ita enim fere comparati sumus, ut cum impressionis vivacitate notionis evidentiam confundamus, eaque clarius intelligere nos arbitremur, quibus imaginandi percussa vis acrius est, et quæ novitate aliquâ commendantur, ea stabiliora sunt ad diuturnitatem memoriæ, neque vetustate ullâ consenescent.* And Spanheim (*Dub. Evang.* vol. ii. p. 497), though he does not urge this side exclusively: They have their use, he says, *ex pulsatione affectuum*: *nec enim major tantum lux ex parabolis, sed etiam vehementior motus.*

chosen. They are arguments, and may be alleged as witnesses; the world of nature being throughout a witness for the world of spirit, proceeding from the same hand, growing out of the same root, and being constituted for that very end. All lovers of truth readily acknowledge these mysterious harmonies, and the force of arguments derived from them. To them the things on earth are copies of the things in heaven. They know that the earthly tabernacle is made after the pattern of things seen in the Mount (Exod. xxv. 40; 1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12);\* and the question suggested by the angel in Milton is often forced upon their meditations,—

“What if earth  
Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein  
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?”†

For it is a great misunderstanding of the matter to think of these as happily, but yet arbitrarily, chosen illustrations, taken with a skilful selection from the great stock and storehouse of unappropriated images; from whence it would have been possible that the same skill might have selected others as good, or nearly as good. Rather they belong to one another, the type and the thing typified, by an inward necessity; they were linked together long before by the law of a secret affinity.‡ It is not a happy accident which has yielded so

\* See IRENÆUS, *Con. Hær.* iv. 14. 3.

† Many are the sayings of a like kind among the Jewish Cabbalists. Thus in the book *Sohar*: Quodcunque in terrâ est, id etiam in cælo est, et nulla res tam exigua est in mundo, quæ non alii simili, quæ in cælo est, correspondeat. In GFRÖRER'S *Urchristenthum*, vol. ii. pp. 26-30, and BÄHR'S *Symb. d. Mos. Cult.* vol. i. p. 109, many like passages are quoted. No one was fuller of this than Tertullian: see his magnificent words on the resurrection (*De Res. Carn.* 12): All things here, he says, are witnesses of a resurrection, all things in nature are prophetic outlines of divine operations, God not merely *speaking* parables, but doing them (*talìa divinarum virium lineamenta, non minus parabolis operato Deo quam locuto*). And again, *De Animâ*, 43, the activity of the soul in sleep is for him at once an argument and an illustration which God has provided us, of its not being tied to the body, to perish with it: *Deus.....manum porrigens fidei, facilius adjuvandæ per imagines et parabolas, sicut sermonum, ita et rerum*.

‡ Out of a true sense of this has grown our use of the word *likely*. There is a confident expectation in the minds of men of the reappearance



wondrous an analogy as that of husband and wife, to set forth the mystery of Christ's relation to his elect Church. There is far more in it than this: the earthly relation is indeed but a lower form of the heavenly, on which it rests, and of which it is the utterance. When Christ spoke to Nicodemus of a new birth, it was not merely because birth into this natural world was the most suitable figure that could be found for the expression of that spiritual act which, without any power of our own, is accomplished upon us when we are brought into God's kingdom; but all the circumstances of this natural birth had been preordained to bear the burden of so great a mystery. The Lord is King, not borrowing this title from the kings of the earth, but having lent his own title to them—and not the name only, but having so ordered, that all true rule and government upon earth, with its righteous laws, its stable ordinances, its punishment and its grace, its majesty and its terror, should tell of Him and of his kingdom which ruleth over all—so that “kingdom of God” is not in fact a figurative expression, but most literal: it is rather the earthly kingdoms and the earthly kings that are figures and shadows of the true. And as in the world of man and human relations, so also is it in the world of nature. The untended soil which yields thorns and briars as its natural harvest is a permanent type and enduring parable of man's heart, which has been submitted to the same curse, and without a watchful spiritual husbandry will as surely put forth *its* briars and *its* thorns. The weeds that *will* mingle during the time of growth with the corn, and yet are separated from it at the last, tell ever one and the same tale of the present admixture, and future sundering, of the righteous and the wicked. The decaying of the slight unsightly seed in the earth, and the rising up, out of that decay and death, of the graceful stalk and the

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ance, in higher spheres, of the same laws and relations which they have recognized in lower; and thus that which is *like* is also *likely* or probable. Butler's *Analogi*, is just the unfolding, as he himself declares at the beginning, in one particular line of this our consciousness that the *like* is also the *likely*.

fruitful ear, contain evermore the prophecy of the final resurrection, even as this is itself in its kind a resurrection,—the same process at a lower stage,—the same power putting itself forth upon meaner things.

Of course it will be always possible for those who shrink from contemplating a higher world-order than that imperfect one around them,—and this, because the thought of such would rebuke their own imperfection and littleness,—who shrink too from a witness for God so near them as even that imperfect order would render, to deny this conclusion. It will be possible for them to reply that it is not thus as we say; but that our talk of heavenly things is only a transferring of earthly images and relations to them;—that earth is not a shadow of heaven, but heaven, such at least as we conceive it, a dream of earth; that the names Father and Son for instance (and this is Arianism) are only *improperly* used, and in a secondary sense, when applied to Divine Persons, and then are terms so encumbered with difficulties and contradictions that they had better not be used at all; that we do not find and recognize heavenly things in their earthly counterparts, but only dexterously adapt them. This denial will be always possible, and has a deeper root than that it can be met with argument; yet the lover of a truth which shall be loftier than himself will not be moved from his faith that however man may be the measure of all things here, yet God is the measure of man,—that the same Lord who sits upon his throne in heaven, does with the skirts of his train fill his temple upon earth,—that these characters of nature which everywhere meet his eye are not a common but a sacred writing,—that they are hieroglyphics of God: and he counts this his blessedness, that he finds himself in the midst of such, and because in the midst of them, therefore never without admonishment and teaching.

For such is in truth the condition of man: around him is a sensuous world, yet not one which need bring him into bondage to his senses, but so framed as, if he will use it aright, continually to lift him above itself—a visible world to make known the invisible things of God, a ladder leading him

up to the contemplation of heavenly truth. And this truth he shall encounter and make his own, not in fleeing from his fellows and their works and ways, but in the mart, on the wayside, in the field—not by stripping himself bare of all relations, but rather recognizing these as instruments through which he is to be educated into the knowledge of higher mysteries; and so dealing with them in reverence, seeking by faithfulness to them in their lower forms to enter into their yet deeper significance—entertaining them, though they seem but common guests, and finding that he has unawares entertained angels. And thus, besides his revelation in words, God has another and an elder, and one indeed without which it is inconceivable how that other could be made, for from this it appropriates all its signs of communication. This entire moral and visible world from first to last, with its kings and its subjects, its parents and its children, its sun and its moon, its sowing and its harvest, its light and its darkness, its sleeping and its waking, its birth and its death, is from beginning to end a mighty parable, a great teaching of supersensuous truth, a help at once to our faith and to our understanding.\*

It is true that men are ever in danger of losing “the key of knowledge,” which should open to them the portals of this palace: and then, instead of a prince in a world of wonder that is serving him, man moves in the midst of this world, alternately its taskmaster and its drudge. Such we see him to become at the two poles of savage and falsely cultivated life—his inner eye darkened, so that he sees nothing, his inner ear heavy, so that there come no voices from nature unto him: and indeed in all, save only in the one Man, there is more or less of the dulled ear, and the filmed eye. There is none to whom nature tells out all that she has to tell, and as con-

\* Abelard's are striking words (*Introd. ad Theol.* ii. 2): *In tantum vero in ipsâ facturâ delectatur Deus, ut frequenter in ipsis rerum naturis quas creavit se figurari magis quam verbis nostris, quæ nos confinximus aut invenimus, exprimi velit, ut magis ipsâ rerum similitudine, quam verborum nostrorum gaudeat proprietate, ut ad eloquentiæ venustatem ipsis rerum naturis, juxta aliquam similitudinem, pro verbis Scriptura malit uti, quam propriæ locutionis integritatem sequi.*

stantly as she would be willing to tell it. Now the whole of Scripture, with its ever-recurring use of figurative language, is a reawakening of man to the mystery of nature, a giving back to him of the key of knowledge, of the true *signatura rerum*: and this comes out, as we might expect, in its highest form, but by no means exclusively, in those which by pre-eminence we call the parables. They have this point of likeness with the miracles, that those, too, were a calling of heed to powers which were daily going forward, but which, by their frequency and their orderly repetition, that ought to have kindled the more admiration, had become wonder-works no more, had lost the power of exciting attention, until men had need to be startled anew to the contemplation of the energies which were ever working among them. In like manner the parables were a calling of attention to the spiritual facts which underlie all processes of nature, all institutions of human society, and which, though unseen, are the true ground and support of all. Christ moved in the midst of what seemed to the eye of sense an old and worn-out world, and it evidently became new at his touch; for it told to man *now* the inmost secrets of his being. He found that it answered with strange and marvellous correspondences to another world within him,—that it helped to the birth great thoughts of his heart, which before were helplessly struggling to be born,—that of these two worlds without him and within each threw a light and a glory on the other.

For on this rests the possibility of a real teaching by parables, such as, resting upon a substantial ground, shall not be a mere building on the air, or painting on a cloud,—on this, namely, that the world around us is a *divine* world, that it is God's world, the world of the same God who is leading us into spiritual truth; that the ghastly dream of Gnostic and Manichæan, who would set a great gulf between the worlds of nature and of grace, ascribing this to a good, but that to an imperfect or an evil power, is a lie; and that, being originally God's world, it is therefore a sharer in his redemption. And yet this redeemed world, like man, is in part redeemed

only in hope (Rom. viii. 20); neither he nor it are in the present possession, but only in the assured certainty, of a complete deliverance. For this, too, we must not leave out of sight, that nature, in its present state, like man himself, contains but a prophecy of its coming glory; it "groaneth and travaileth;" it cannot tell out all its secrets; it has a presentiment of something, which it is not yet, but hereafter shall be. It, too, is suffering under our curse: yet even thus in its very imperfection wonderfully serving us, since thus it has apter signs and symbols to declare to us our disease and our misery, and the processes of their healing and removing; it has symbols not merely of God's grace and power, but also of man's sins and wretchedness. It has its sores and its wounds, its storms and its wildernesses, its lion and its adder, by these interpreting to us death and all that leads to death, no less than, by its more beneficent workings, life and all that tends to the restoring and maintaining of life.

But while thus it has this merciful adaptation to our needs, not the less does it, in this fallen estate, come short of its full purpose and meaning: it fails in part to witness for a divine order, *tantâ stat prædita culpâ*,—as one, whose eye was mainly directed to this its disorder and deficiency, exclaimed. It does not give always a clear witness, nor speak out in distinct accents, of God's truth and love. Of these it is oftentimes the inadequate expression—yea, sometimes seems not to declare them at all, but rather in volcano and in earthquake, in ravenous beasts and in poisonous herbs, to tell of strife, and discord, and disharmony, and all the woful consequences of the fall. But one day it will be otherwise; one day it will be translucent with the divine idea which it embodies, and which even now, despite these dark spots, shines through it so wondrously. For no doubt the end and consummation will be, not the abolition of this nature, but the glorifying of it; that which is now nature (*natura*), always, as the word expresses, striving and struggling to the birth, will then be indeed born. The new creation will be as the glorious child born out of the world-long throes and anguish

of the old. It will be as the snake casting its wrinkled and winter skin; not the world, but "*the fashion of the world*," passing away, when it puts off its soiled work-day garments, and puts on its holiday apparel for the great Sabbath which shall arrive at last. Then, when it too shall have been delivered from its bondage of corruption, all that it now has of dim and contradictory and perplexing shall disappear. This nature, too, shall be a mirror in which God will perfectly glass himself, for it shall tell of nothing but the marvels of his wisdom, and power, and love.

But at present, while this natural world, through its share in man's fall, has won in fitness for the expression of the sadder side of man's condition, the imperfection and evil that cling to him and beset him, it has in some measure lost in fitness for the expressing of the higher. It possesses the best, yet oftentimes inadequate, helps for this. These human relationships, and this whole constitution of things earthly, share in the shortcoming that cleaves to all which is of the earth. Obnoxious to change, tainted with sin, shut in within brief limits by decay and death, they are often weak and temporary, where they have to set forth things strong and eternal. A sinful element is evidently mingled with them, while they yet appear as symbols of what is entirely pure and heavenly. They break down under the weight that is laid upon them. The father chastens after his own pleasure, instead of wholly for the child's profit; in this unlike that heavenly Father, whose character he is to set forth. The seed which is to set forth the word of God, that Word which liveth and abideth for ever, itself decays and perishes at last. Festivals, so frequently the image of the pure joy of the kingdom, of the communion of the faithful with their Lord and with one another, will often, when here celebrated, be mixed up with much that is carnal, and they come to their close in a few hours. There is something exactly analogous to all this in the typical or parabolical personages of Scripture—the men that are to set forth the Divine Man. Through their sins, through their infirmities—yea, through the necessary limita-

tions of their earthly condition, they are unable to carry the correspondences completely out. Sooner or later they break down; and very often even the part which they do sustain, they sustain it not for long. Thus few would deny the typical character of Solomon. His kingdom of peace, the splendour of his court, his wisdom, the temple which he reared, all point to a Greater whom he foreshowed. Yet this gorgeous forecasting of the coming glory is vouchsafed to us only for an instant; it is but a glimpse of it we catch. Even before his reign is done, all is beginning to dislimn again, to lose the distinctness of its outline, the brightness of its colouring. His wisdom is darkened, the perfect peace of his land is no more; and the gloom on every side encroaching warns us that this is but a fleeting image, not the very substance, of the true kingdom of peace.

Again, we see some men in whom there is but a single point in their history which brings them into typical relation with Christ; such was Jonah, the type of the Resurrection: or persons whose lives at one moment and another seem suddenly to stand out as symbolic; but then sink back so far that we almost doubt whether we may dare to consider them as such at all, and in whose case the attempt to "carry out the resemblance into greater detail would involve in infinite embarrassment. Samson will at once suggest himself as one of these. It is scarcely possible to believe that something more was not meant than is contained in the letter, when out of the eater he brought forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness (Judg. xiv. 14); or when he wrought a mightier deliverance for Israel through his death than he had wrought in his life (Judg. xvi. 30). Yet we hesitate how far we may proceed. And so it is in every case, for somewhere or other every man is a liar; he is false, that is, to the divine idea, which he was meant to embody, and fails to bring it out in all the fulness of its perfections. So that of the truths of God in the language of men (which language of course includes man's acts as well as his words), of these sons of heaven married to the daughters of earth, it may truly be said, "we have this treasure in earthen

vessels." And it must only be looked for, that somewhere or other the earthen vessel will appear, that the imperfection which cleaves to our forms of utterance, to men's words and to their works, will make itself felt either in the misapprehensions of those to whom the language is addressed (as at John iii. 11), or by the language itself, though the best that human speech could supply, by the men themselves, though the noblest, it may be, of their age and nation,—yet failing to set forth the divine truth in all its fulness and completeness.\*

No doubt it was a feeling, working more or less consciously, of the dangers and drawbacks that attend all our means of communication—a desire, also, to see eye to eye, or, as St. Paul terms it, face to face† (1 Cor. xiii. 12), which caused the mystics to press with such earnestness and frequency, that we should seek to abstract ourselves from all

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\* It is now rather *ἐκ μέρους, ἐν αἰνίγματι, δι' ἐσόπτρου* (1 Cor. xiii 9, 12), *ἐν παροιμίαις* (John xvi 25). Cf. BERNARD, *In Cant. Serm.* xxxi 8 A Persian mystical poet has caught and finely expressed this truth (see THOLUCK'S *Bluthensamm. aus d. Morgenl. Mystik*, p. 216).

Die Sinnewelt ein Schatten ist der Geistwelt,  
Herab von dieser jener Nahrungsmilch quellt  
Gefühle sind gefangene Monarchen,  
Die in der Worte-Kerker sich verbargen.  
Tritt das Unendliche in's Herz des Weisen,  
Muss flugs hinab er zum Verstande reisen.  
Der muss die Schattenbilder ihm gewähren,  
Damit er könn' Unendliches erklären;  
Doch nimmer ist das Abbild je vollkommen,  
Nur Selbstverständniß kann dir wehrhaft frommen.  
Denn ziehst aus jedem Bild du Konsequenzen,  
Musst hier du Vieles wegthun, dort ergänzen.

† John Smith (*Select Disc.* p. 159) observes, that the later Platonists had three terms to distinguish the different degrees of divine knowledge, *κατ' ἐπιστήμην, κατὰ νόησιν, and κατὰ παρουσίαν*. If we assumed these into Christian theology,—and they very nearly agree with the threefold division of St. Bernard (*De Consid.* v. 3), *opinio, fides, and intellectus* (intuition),—we might say of the first, that it is common to all men, being merely notional, knowing about God: the second is the privilege of the faithful now, the knowing God: the third, the *αἰροφάνεια* of the same school, the "Arcanum facierum" of the Jewish doctors, will be their possession in the world to come, the seeing God, the reciprocity of which is finally indicated by Augustine,



images of things ; that to raise ourselves to the contemplation of pure and naked truth is the height of spiritual attainment, towards which we should continually be struggling.\* But in requiring this as a test and proof of spiritual progress—in setting it as the mark towards which men should strive, they were not merely laying unnecessary burdens on men's backs, but actually leading astray. For whether one shall separate in his own consciousness the form from the essence,—whether the images which he uses shall be to him more or less conscious symbols,—does not depend on his greater or less advance in spiritual knowledge, but on causes which may or may not accompany religious growth, and mainly on this one,—whether he has been accustomed to think upon his thoughts, to reflect upon the wonderful instrument which in language he is using. One who possesses the truth only as it is incorporated in the symbol, may yet have a far stronger hold upon it, may be influenced by it far more mightily, may far more really be nourished by it than another, who, according to the mystic view, would be in a higher and more advanced state. It is true, indeed, that for them who have not merely to live upon the truth themselves, but to guard it for others,—not merely to drink of the streams of divine knowledge, but to see that the waters of its well-heads be not troubled for their brethren,—for them it is well that they should be conscious, and the more conscious the better, of the wonderful thing which lan-

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when he terms it, *Videre Videntem*. It was this, according to many of the Jewish interpreters, which Moses craved when he said, "I beseech Thee, show me thy glory," but which was denied him, as being impossible for man in this present life : "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exod xxxiii. 18-20). Yet he, too, they say, came nearer to this than any other of the Lord's prophets (see MEUSCHEN'S *N. T. ex Talm. illustr.* p. 373). In a striking Mohammedan tradition, the Lord convinces Moses how fearful a thing it would be to comply with his request, "Show me thy glory,"—by suffering a spark of that glory, the fulness of which Moses had craved to see, to fall upon a mountain, which instantly burst into a thousand fragments.

\* Thauler, for instance, is continually urging, *Ut ab omnibus imaginibus denudemur et exuamur*,—Fenelon the same; and, indeed, all the mystics, from Dionysius downward, agree in this.

guage is,—of the power and mystery, of the truth and falsehood, of words; and as a part of this acquaintance, that the truth, and that which is the vehicle of the truth, should for them be separable; but then it should be even for them as soul and body, not as kernel and husk. This last comparison has been often used, but may easily be pushed into an error. It has been said that, as when the seed is cast into the ground, after a time the kernel disengages itself from the outer coating, and alone remains and fructifies, while the husk decays and perishes; so in the seed of God's word, deposited in man's heart, the sensible form must fall off, that the inner germ, releasing itself, may germinate. But the image, urged thus far, does not aptly set forth the truth; it will lead in the end to a Quaker-like contempt of the written word, under pretence of having the inner life. The outer covering is not to fall off and perish, but to become glorified, being pierced and penetrated by the spirit that is within. Man is body and soul, and, being so, the truth has for him need of a body and soul likewise: it is well that he should know what is body, and what is soul, but not that he should seek to kill the body, that he may get at the soul.

Thus it was provided for us by a wisdom higher than our own, and all our attempts to disengage ourselves wholly from sensuous images must always in the end be unsuccessful. It will be only a changing of our images, and that for the worse; a giving up of living realities which truly stir the heart, and a getting of dead metaphysical abstractions in their room. The aim of the teacher, who would find his way to the hearts and understandings of his hearers, will never be to keep down the parabolical element in his teaching, but rather to make as much and as frequent use of it as he can. To do this effectually will demand a fresh effort of his own; for while all language is, and of necessity must be, figurative, yet long familiar use is continually wearing out the freshness and sharpness of the stamp—(who, for example, that speaks of *insulting*, retains the lively image of a leaping on the prostrate body of a foe?); so that to create a powerful impression, language must be

recalled, minted and issued anew, cast into novel forms, as was done by Him of whom it is said, that without a parable spake He nothing; He gave no doctrine in an abstract form, no skeletons of truth, but all clothed, as it were, with flesh and blood. He did, as He declared his apostles must do, if they would be scribes instructed unto the kingdom, and able to instruct others (Matt. xiii. 52); He brought forth out of his treasure things new and old: by the help of the old He made intelligible the new; by the aid of the familiar He introduced that which was strange; from the known He passed more easily to the unknown. And in his own manner of teaching He has given us the secret of all effectual teaching, of all speaking which shall leave, as was said of the eloquence of Pericles,\* stings in the minds and memories of the hearers. There is a natural delight† which the mind has in this manner of teaching, appealing, as it does, not to the understanding only, but to the feelings, to the imagination, and in short to the whole man; calling the whole man, with all his powers and faculties, into pleasurable activity: and things thus learned with delight are those longest remembered.‡

Had our Lord spoken naked spiritual truth, how many of his words, partly from his hearers' lack of interest in them, partly from their lack of insight, would have passed away from their hearts and memories, and left no trace behind them.§

\* Cicero, *De Orat.* iii. 34.

† This delight has indeed impressed itself upon our language itself. To *like* a thing is to compare it with some other thing which we have already before our natural, or our mind's, eye: and the pleasurable emotion always arising from this process of comparison has caused us to use the word in a far wider sense than that which belonged to it at the first. That we *like* what is *like* is the explanation of the pleasure which rhyme gives us.

‡ Thus Jerome (*Comm. in Matt.* in loc.) describes the purpose of the parable: Ut quod per simplex præceptum teneri ab auditoribus non potest, per similitudinem exemplaque teneatur.

§ It was, no doubt, from a deep feeling of this that the Jewish Cabbalists affirmed, *Lumen supernum nunquam descendit sine indumento*; with which agrees the saying of the pseudo-Dionysius, so often quoted by the Schoolmen, *Impossibile est nobis aliter lucere divinum radium nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum*.

But being imparted to them in this form, under some lively image, in some short and perhaps seemingly paradoxical sentence, or in some brief but interesting narrative, they awakened attention, excited inquiry, and even if the truth did not at the moment, by the help of the illustration used, find an entrance into the mind, yet the words must thus often have fixed themselves in their memories and remained by them.\* And here the comparison of the seed is appropriate, of which the shell should guard the life of the inner germ, till that should be ready to unfold itself, till there should be a soil prepared for it, in which it could take root and find nourishment suitable to its needs. His words, laid up in the memory, were to many that heard Him like the money of another country, unavailable, it might be, for present use,—the value of which they only dimly knew, but which yet was ready in their hand, when they reached that land, and were naturalized in it. When the Spirit came, and brought all things to their remembrance, then He filled all the outlines of truth which they before possessed with its substance, quickened all its forms with the power and spirit of life. Not perhaps at once, but gradually, the meanings of what they had heard unfolded themselves to them. Small to the small, they grew with their growth. And thus must it ever be with all true knowledge, which is not the communication of information, the transfer of a dead sum or capital of facts or theories from one mind to another, but the opening of living fountains within the heart, the scattering of sparks which shall kindle where they fall, the planting of seeds of truth, which shall take root in the new soil where they are cast, and striking their roots downward, and sending their branches upward, shall grow up into goodly trees.

Nor is it unworthy of remark, when we are estimating the amount of the parabolic element in Scripture, how much besides the spoken, there is there of acted, parable. In addi-

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\* Bernard : An non expedit tenere vel involutum, quod nudum non capis ?

tion to those which, by a more especial right, we separate off, and call by that name, every type is a *real* parable. The whole Levitical constitution, with its outer court, its holy, its holiest of all, its high priest, its sacrifices, and all its ordinances, is such, and is declared to be such, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 9). The wanderings of the children of Israel have ever been regarded as a parable of the spiritual life. In like manner we have parabolic persons, who are to teach us not merely by what simply in their own characters they did, but as they represented One higher and greater; men whose actions and whose sufferings obtain a new significance, inasmuch as they were in these drawing lines, though often quite unaware of it themselves, which another should hereafter fill up; as Abraham when he cast out the bondwoman and her son (Gal. iv. 30), Jonah in the whale's belly, David in his hour of peril or of agony (Ps. xxii.). And in narrower circles, without touching on the central fact and Person in the kingdom of God, how often has He chosen that his servants should teach by an acted parable rather than by any other means, and this because no other teaching was fitted to make so deep and so lasting an impression. Thus, Jeremiah is to break in pieces a potter's vessel, that he may foretell the complete destruction of his people (xix. 1-11); he wears a yoke, that he may be himself a prophecy and a parable of their approaching bondage (xxvii. 2; xxviii. 10); he redeems a field, in pledge of a redemption that shall yet be of all the land (xxxii. 6-15). It will at once be seen that these examples might be infinitely multiplied. And as God will have them by these signs to teach others, He continually teaches *them* also by the same. It is not his word only that comes to his prophets, but the great truths of his kingdom pass before their eyes incorporated in symbols, addressing themselves first to the spiritual eye, and only through that to the spiritual ear. They are indeed and eminently *Seers*. Ezekiel and Zechariah will at once suggest themselves, as those of whom, more than, perhaps, any others, this was true. And in the New Testament we have a great example of the

same teaching in St. Peter's vision (Acts x. 9-16), and throughout all the visions of the Apocalypse. Nay, we might venture to affirm that so it was with the highest and greatest truth of all, that which includes all others—the manifestation of God in the flesh. This, inasmuch as it was a making intelligible of the otherwise unintelligible; a making visible of the invisible; a teaching, not by doctrine, but by the embodied doctrine of a divine life, was the highest and most glorious of all parables.\*

With regard to the record which we have of our Lord's parables, it would be an interesting study to trace the distinctive character of the different Gospels in the parables which they record; or, where the parables are common to more than one, in the especial circumstances which they bring prominently out. Here, indeed, only St. Matthew and St. Luke will come into comparison, St. John having allegories, as of the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, but no parables; while St. Mark has but one brief one, peculiarly his own (iv. 26), and in his record of those which he has in common with St. Matthew or St. Luke, or both, presents nothing especially noteworthy. We may say generally of the parables, thus compared, that St. Matthew's are more theocratic; St. Luke's, more ethical; St. Matthew's are more parables of judgment—St. Luke's, of mercy; those are staterlier, these tenderer. St. Matthew's are frequently introduced as containing mysteries of the kingdom of God, language which nowhere occurs in St. Luke; and in those of the earlier Evangelist God evermore appears as the king that, sitting on his throne, scattereth away all evil with his eyes, and has a readiness to avenge all disobedience; thus, how many of them conclude with distinct judgment acts of a greater or a lesser severity (xiii. 42, 49; xviii. 34; xx. 14; xxi. 41; xxii. 7, 13; xxv. 12, 30). Such judgment acts are, of course, not wanting

\* See a few words on this in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, 5, and in CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (*Strom.* 6, Potter's ed. p. 803): Παραβολικός γὰρ ὁ χαρακτήρ ὑπάρχει τῶν γραφῶν. διότι καὶ ὁ Κύριος, οὐκ ὡν κοσμικός, ὡς κοσμικός εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἦλθεν.

in those of St. Luke; but they are of much less frequent occurrence, while mercy supplies to them their ground-tone, as it does to the whole Gospel whereunto they belong. They are of the tree which was spared at the gardener's intercession (xiii. 6); of the Samaritan that poured oil and wine into the traveller's wounds (x. 30); of the father that welcomed back his penitent son (xv. 11); nay, even the parable of Dives and Lazarus is a parable of mercy, for it is the declaration of what the issues of *not* showing mercy will be.

Nowhere do the characteristic differences of the two Evangelists come out more strikingly than where they record parables, of which the features in many respects resemble one another. The difference which declares itself in the midst of this likeness is peculiarly instructive. Thus compare St. Matthew's parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (xxii. 1), and St. Luke's, of the Great Supper (xiv. 16). These are not, as I hope by and bye to prove, two different records or versions of the same parable, but the Lord spake two parables, which were indeed akin to, but yet distinct from, one another. As nothing is so ductile as fine gold, so was it with the fine gold of his doctrine. It yielded itself easily to be fashioned and moulded into new shapes, according to the different needs of different times and persons. And the Evangelists severally recorded that aspect of the parable which corresponded most to their own spiritual predispositions, which fitted in the closest with the special purpose of their Gospel. Thus in St. Matthew we have a king for the chief personage, with the king's son, for whom a marriage-festival is made. All is here of the theocracy; all seems to grow directly out of an Old-Testament root. And then, how characteristic of this narrator is the double doom—first, of the open foe, and then of the false friend! In St. Luke, on the contrary, it is simply a man who makes a supper; the two judgment acts fall altogether into the background; while, on the other hand, the grace, the mercy, the compassion of the giver of the feast, which lead him again and again to send forth that he may gather in the meanest, the most despised, the most outcast, to

his table ; all this, so distinctive of this Evangelist, comes in his record of the parable prominently forward. These are but slight hints on a matter which each student of the parables might profitably follow out for himself.\*

\* In addition to our recorded parables, Papias, a hearer of St. John, professed to have received by tradition certain other parables of our Lord's (ξέναις παραβολαῖς Eusebius, *H. E.* iii. 39, calls them), which he recorded in his lost book, *An Account of the Lord's Sayings*

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## CHAPTER III.

### ON THE INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES.

THE parables, fair in their outward form, are yet fairer within, apples of gold in network of silver; each one of them like a casket, itself of exquisite workmanship, but in which jewels yet richer than itself are laid up; or as fruit, which, however lovely to look upon, is yet more delectable still in its inner sweetness.\* To find, then, the golden key for this casket, at whose touch it shall reveal its treasures; so to open this fruit, that nothing of its hidden kernel shall be missed or lost, has naturally been regarded ever as a matter of high concern.† And in this, the interpretation of the parable, a subject to which we have now arrived, there is one question of more importance than any other—one presenting itself so continually anew, that it will naturally claim to be the first and the most fully considered. It is this, How much of them is to be taken as significant? and to this question the answers have been the most different. There are those who expect to trace only the most general correspondence between the sign and the thing signified; while others aim at running out the interpretation into the minutest detail; with occupants of every intermediate stage between these extremes. Some have gone far in saying, This is merely drapery and ornament, and not the vehicle of essential truth; this was introduced either to give liveliness and a general air of verisimilitude to the narrative, or as actually necessary to make

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\* Bernard: *Superficies ipsa, tanquam a foris considerata, decora est valde: et si quis fregerit nucem, intus inveniet quod jucundius sit, et multo amplius delectabile.*

† Jerome (*In Eccles.*). *Parabolæ aliud in medullâ habent, aliud in superficie pollicentur: et quasi in terrâ aurum, in nuce nucleus, in hirsutis castanearum operculis absconditus fructus inquiritur, ita in eis divinus sensus altius perscrutandus.*

the story, which is the vehicle of the truth, a consistent whole, since without this consistency the hearer would have been perplexed or offended, to hold together and connect the different parts,—just as in the most splendid house there must be passages, not for their own sake, but to lead from one room to another.\* They have used often the illustration of the knife, which is not all edge; of the harp, which is not all strings; they have urged that much in the knife, which does not cut, is yet of prime necessity, as the handle,—much, in the musical instrument, which is never intended to give sound, must yet not be wanting: or, to use another comparison, that many circumstances “in Christ’s parables are like the feathers which wing our arrows, which, though they pierce not like the head, but seem slight things and of a different matter from the rest, are yet requisite to make the shaft to pierce, and do both convey it to and penetrate the mark.”† To this school Chry-

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\* Tertullian (*De Pudicitia*, 9): Quare centum oves? et quid utique decem drachmæ? et quæ illæ scopæ? Necesse erat qui unus peccatoris salutem gratissimam Deo volebat exprimere, aliquam numeri quantitatem nominaret, de quo unum quidem perisse describeret. necesse erat ut habitus requirentis drachmam in domo, tam scoparum quam lucernæ adminiculo accommodaretur. Hujusmodi enim curiositates et suspecta faciunt quædam, et coactarum expositionum subtilitate plenumque deducunt a veritate. Sunt autem quæ et simpliciter posita sunt ad struendam et disponendam et texendam parabolam, ut illuc perducantur, cui exemplum procuratur. Brower (*De Pur. J. C.* p. 175): Talia omitti non potuerunt, quoniam eorum tantum ope res ad eventum facile perducî posset, cum alioquin saltus fieret aut hiatus in narratione, qui rei narratæ similitudini omnino noceret, vel quia eorum neglectus auditores fortasse ad inanes quæstiones et dubitationes invitare posset.

† BOYLE’S *Style of the Holy Scriptures; Fifth Objection*. There is a remarkable passage in Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, xvi. 2), where he carries out this view still further: Non sane omnia quæ gesta narrantur, aliquid etiam significare putanda sunt: sed propter illa quæ aliquid significant, etiam illa quæ nihil significant attextuntur. Solo enim vomere terra proscinditur, sed ut hoc fieri possit, etiam cætera aratri membra sunt necessaria. Et soli nervi in citharis atque hujusmodi vasis musicis aptantur ad cantum, sed ut aptari possint, insunt et cætera in compaginibus organorum, quæ non percuntur a canentibus, sed ea quæ percussa resonant his connectuntur. Ita in prophetica historiâ dicuntur et aliqua, quæ nihil significant, sed quibus adhæreant quæ significant, et quodam modo religuntur. Cf. *Con. Faust.* xxii. 94. A Romish expositor, Salmeron, has a comparison something

sostom belongs. He continually warns against pressing too anxiously all the circumstances of a parable, and often cuts his own interpretation somewhat short in language like this, "Be not curious about the rest :"\* to this, too, the interpreters that habitually follow him, Theophylact† and others, though not always faithful to their own principles. So also Origen, who illustrates his meaning by a comparison of great beauty. He says, "For as the likenesses which are given in pictures and statues are not perfect resemblances of those things for whose sake they are made—but for instance the image which is painted in wax on a plain surface of wood, contains a resemblance of the superficies and colours, but does not also preserve the depressions and prominences, but only a representation of them—while a statue, again, seeks to preserve the likeness which consists in prominences and depressions, but not as well that which is in colours—but should the statue be of wax, it seeks to retain both, I mean the colours, and also the depressions and prominences, but is not an image of those things which are within—in the same manner, of the parables which are contained in the Gospels so account, that the kingdom of heaven, when it is likened to anything, is not likened to it according to *all* the things which are contained in that with which the comparison is instituted, but according to cer-

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similar. Certum est gladium non omni ex parte scindere, sed unâ tantum: nec enim per manubrium secat, neque per partem obtusam oppositam aciei, neque per cuspidem, sed tantum per aciem secat. Et tamen nemo sanæ mentis dixerit aut manubrium aut cuspidem aut partem obtusam oppositam aciei, necessaria non esse ad scindendum: nam etsi per se ipsa non scindant, serviunt tamen ut pars quæ acuta est, et ad secandum nata, scindere fortius et commodius valeat. Ita in parabolis multa afferuntur, quæ etsi per se ipsa sensum spiritalem non efficiunt, conducunt tamen ut parabola per illam partem scindat et secet, ad quod præstandum ab auctore proposita fuerat.

\* Τάλλα μὴ περιεργάζου.

† Theophylact (*In Luc.* 16). Πᾶσα παραβολὴ πλαγίως καὶ εἰκονικῶς δηλοῖ πραγμάτων τιῶν φύσιν, οὐ κατὰ πάντα εἰκονῖα τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐκείνοις, δι' ἃ παρελήφθη. δι' ὃ οὐδὲ χρὴ πάντα τὰ μέρη τῶν παραβολῶν λεπτῶς πολυπραγμονεῦσθαι, ἀλλ' ὅσον εἰκε τῷ προκειμένῳ καρπομένους. τὰ λοιπὰ ἔαν, ὥς τῇ παραβολῇ συνυφιστάμενα, καὶ μηδὲν πρὸς τὸ προκείμενον συμβαλλόμενα.

tain qualities which the matter in hand requires.”\* Exactly thus Tillotson has said that the parable and its interpretation are not to be contemplated as two planes, touching one another at every point, but oftentimes rather as a plane and a globe, which, though brought into contact, yet touch one another only at one.

On the other hand, Augustine, though sometimes laying down the same canon himself, frequently extends the interpretation through all the branches and minutest fibres of the narrative;† and Origen no less, despite the passage which I have just quoted. And in modern times, the followers of Cocceius have been particularly earnest in affirming all parts of a parable to be significant.‡ Perhaps I might mar the pleasure of some readers in the following noble passage, by saying from whence it was drawn: but the writer is describing the long and laborious care which he took to master the literal meaning of every word in the parables, being confident of the riches of inward truth which every one of those words contained; he goes on to say: “Of my feelings and progress in studying the parables of our Lord, I have found no similitude worthy to convey the impression, save that of sailing through between the Pillars of Hercules into the Mediterranean Sea, where you have to pass between armed rocks, in a strait, and under a current—all requiring careful and skilful seamanship—but being past, opening into such a large, expansive, and serene ocean of truth, so engirdled round with rich and fertile lands, so inlaid with beautiful and verdant islands, and full of rich colonies and populous cities, that unspeakable is the delight and the reward it yieldeth to the voyager.” He and others have protested against that shallow spirit which is ever ready to empty Scripture of its deeper

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\* *Comm. in Matt.* xiii 47.

† See a wonderful instance of the extent to which this may be done in an exposition of the Prodigal Son, given in his *Quæst. Evang.* ii. qu. 33.

‡ Teelman (*Comm. in Luc.* xvi. 34-52) defends this principle at length and with much ability.

meaning, to exclaim, "This means nothing, this circumstance is not to be pressed;" which, satisfying itself with sayings like these, fails to draw out from the word of God all the rich treasures that are contained in it for us, or to recognize the manifold wisdom with which its type is often constructed to correspond with the antitype. They bid us to observe that of those who start with the principle that so much is to be set aside as non-essential, scarcely are to be found any two agreed, when it comes to the application of their principle, concerning what actually is to be set aside; what one rejects another retains, and the contrary: and further, that the more this scheme is carried out, the more the peculiar beauty of the parable disappears, and the interest of it lost. For example, when Calvin will not allow the oil in the vessels of the wise virgins (Matt. xxv. 4) to mean any thing, nor the vessels themselves, nor the lamps;\* and when Storr,† who, almost more than any other, would leave the parables bare trunks, stripped of all their foliage and branches, of all that made for beauty and ornament, denies that the Prodigal leaving his father's house has any direct reference to man's departure from the presence of his heavenly Father, it is at once evident of how much not merely of pleasure, but of instruction, they would deprive us. They urge, too, in opposition to the interpretation of the parables merely in the gross, that when our Lord himself interpreted the two first which He delivered, those of the Sower and of the Tares, it is more than probable that He intended to furnish us with a key for the interpretation of all. These explanations, therefore, are most important, not merely for their own sakes, but as supplying principles and canons of interpretation to be applied throughout. Now, in these the moral application descends to some of the minutest details of the narrative: thus, the birds which snatch away the seed sown, are explained as Satan who takes the

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\* Multum se torquent quidam in lucernis, in vasis, in oleo; atqui simplex et genuina summa est non sufficere alacre exigui temporis studium, nisi infatigabilis constantia simul accedat.

† *De Parabolis Christi*, in his *Opusc. Acad.* vol. i. p. 89.

good word out of the heart (Matt. xiii. 19), the thorns correspond to the cares and pleasures of life (Matt. xiii. 22), with much more of the same kind.

On a review of the whole controversy it may safely be said, that there have been exaggerations upon both sides. The advocates of interpretation in the gross and not in detail, have been too easily satisfied with their favourite saying, "Every comparison must halt somewhere;"\* since one may well demand, "Where is the necessity?" There is no force in the reply, that unless it did so, it would not be an illustration of the thing, but the thing itself; since two lines do not become one, nor cease to be two, because they run parallel through their whole course: it needs not that they somewhere cease to be parallel, to prevent them from being one and the same.† It may well be considered, too, whether these interpreters, in their fear of capricious allegories, have not run into an opposite extreme. At the same time, there is in that other scheme of interpretation the danger of ingenious trifling with the word of God; a danger, too, lest the interpreter's delight in the exercise of this ingenuity, with the admiration of it on the part of others, may not put somewhat out of sight that the sanctification of the heart through the truth is the main purpose of all Scripture: even as there will presently be occasion to observe how heretics, through this pressing of all parts of a parable to the uttermost, have been wont to extort from it almost any meaning that they pleased.

After all has been said, we are obliged to confess that no absolute rule can be laid down beforehand to guide the expositor as to how far he shall proceed. Much must be left to good sense, to that reverence for the word of God, which will show itself sometimes in refusing curiosities of interpretation, no less than at other times in demanding a distinct spiritual

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\* Omne simile claudicat.

† Theophylact (in SUICER'S *Theos. s. v. παραβολή*): 'Ἡ παραβολή, ἐὰν διὰ πάντων σώζεται, οὐκ ἔστι παραβολή, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο, δι' ὃ ἡ παραβολή.

meaning for the words which are before it. The nearest approach, perhaps, to a canon of interpretation on the matter is that which Tholuck lays down:—"It must be allowed," he says, "that a similitude is perfect in proportion as it is on all sides rich in applications;\* and hence, in treating the parables of Christ, the expositor must proceed on the presumption that there is import in every single point, and only desist from seeking it, when either it does not result without forcing, or when we can clearly show that this or that circumstance was merely added for the sake of giving intuitiveness to the narrative. We should not assume anything to be non-essential, except when by holding it fast as essential, the unity of the whole is marred and troubled."† For, to follow up these words of his,—in the same manner as a statue is the more perfect in the measure that the life, the idea that was in the sculptor's mind, breathes out of and looks through every feature and limb, so much the greater being the triumph of spirit, penetrating through and glorifying the matter which it has as-

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\* Vitringa: Placent mihi qui ex parabolis Christi Domini plus veritatis eliciunt, quam generale quoddam præceptum ethicum, per parabolam illustratum et auditorum animis fortius infixum. Non quod audacter pronunciare sustineam, ejusmodi institutionis aut persuasionis genus, si Domino nostro placuisset illud adhibere, cum summâ ejus sapientiâ non potuisse consistere. Contendo tamen de summâ sapientiâ qualis illa fuit Filii Dei, nos merito plus præsumere, ac propterea, si parabolæ Christi Domini ita explicari queant, ut singulæ earum partes commode et absque violentis contortionibus transferantur ad œconomiam Ecclesiæ, illud ego explicationis genus tanquam optimum amplectendum, et cæteris præferendum existimo. Quanto enim plus solidæ veritatis ex Verbo Dei eruerimus, si nihil obstat, tanto magis divinam commendabimus sapientiam.

† Out of this feeling the Jewish doctors distinguished lower forms of revelation from higher, dreams from prophetic communications thus, that in the higher all was essential, while the dream ordinarily contained something that was superfluous; and they framed this axiom,—“As there is no corn without straw, so neither is there any mere dream without something that is ἀργόν, void of reality and insignificant.” They would instance Joseph's dream (Gen xxxvii. 9); the moon could not there have been well left out, when all the heavenly host did obeisance to him: yet this circumstance was thus ἀργόν, for his mother, who thereby was signified, was even then dead, and so incapable of rendering hereafter the homage to him which the others at last did (see JOHN SMITH'S *Discourses*, p. 178).

sumed ; so the more translucent a parable is in all parts with the divine truth which it embodies, the more the garment with which that is arrayed, is a garment of light, pierced through, as was once the raiment of Christ, with the brightness within—illuminating it in all its recesses and corners, and leaving no dark place in it—by so much the more beautiful and perfect it must be esteemed.

It will much help us in this matter of determining what is essential and what not, if, before we attempt to explain the particular parts, we obtain a firm grasp of the central truth which the parable would set forth, and distinguish it in the mind as sharply and accurately as we can from all cognate truths which border upon it ; for only seen from that middle point will the different parts appear in their true light. “One may compare,” says a late writer on the parables,\* “the entire parable with a circle, of which the middle point is the spiritual truth or doctrine, and of which the radii are the several circumstances of the narration ; so long as one has not placed oneself in the centre, neither the circle itself appears in its perfect shape, nor will the beautiful unity with which the radii converge to a single point be perceived, but this is all observed as soon as the eye looks forth from the centre. Even so in the parable ; if we have recognized its middle point, its main doctrine, in full light, then will the proportion and right signification of all particular circumstances be clear unto us, and we shall lay stress upon them only so far as the main truth is thereby more vividly set forth.”

There is another rule which it is important to observe, which, at the same time, is so simple and obvious, that were it not very frequently neglected, it would hardly be thought

\* Lisco, *Die Parabeln Jesu*, p. 22 ; a sound and useful work, though content to remain too much on the surface of its subject. I may take the opportunity of saying that Stier in his *Reden Jesu*—an exposition of our Lord's discourses—has deeper and truer things on the parables than any modern theologian of Germany. I have often, in later editions of this work, profited by hints derived from his book. Would that it had not grown to so vast a bulk as almost to preclude the hope of its ever being translated !



needful to be mentioned, but might be left to the common sense of every interpreter. It is this, that as, in the explanation of the fable, the introduction (*προμύθιον*) and application (*ἐπιμύθιον*) claim to be most carefully attended to, so here what some have entitled the pro-parabola and epi-parabola, though the other terms would have done sufficiently well; which are invariably the finger-posts pointing to the direction in which we are to look for the meaning—the key to the whole matter. These deserve the most attentive heed, as their neglect often involves in the most untenable explanations; for instance, how many of the interpretations which have been elaborately worked out of the Labourers in the Vineyard, could never have been so much as once proposed, if heed had been paid to the context, or the necessity been acknowledged of bringing the interpretation into harmony with the saying which introduces and winds up the parable. These helps to interpretation, though rarely or never lacking,\* are yet given in no fixed or formal manner; sometimes they are supplied by the Lord himself (Matt. xxii. 14; xxv. 13); sometimes by the inspired narrators of his words (Luke xv. 1, 2; xviii. 1); sometimes, as the prologue, they precede the parable (Luke xviii. 9; xix. 11); sometimes, as the epilogue, they follow (Matt. xxv. 13; Luke xvi. 9). Occasionally a parable is furnished with these helps to its right understanding and application both at its opening and its close; as is that of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. xviii. 23), which is suggested by the question which Peter asks (ver. 21), and wound up by the application which the Lord himself makes (ver. 35). So again the parable at Matt. xx. 1-15, begins and finishes with the same saying, and Luke xii. 16-20 is supplied with the same amount of help for its right understanding.†

\* Tertullian (*De Res. Carn.* 33): Nullam parabolam non aut ab ipso invenias edisseratam, ut de Semiatore in verbi administratione; aut a commentatore Evangelii præluminatam, ut judicis superbi et viduæ instantis ad perseverantiam orationis; aut ultro conjectandam, ut arboris fici, dilatæ in spem, ad in. tar Judaicæ infructuositatis.

† Salmeron (*Serm. in Evang. Par.* p. 19) has a threefold division

Again, we may observe that a correct interpretation, besides being thus in accordance with its context, must be so without any very violent means being applied to bring it into such agreement; even as, generally, the interpretation must be easy—if not always easy to be discovered, yet, being discovered, easy. For it is here as with the laws of nature; the proleptic mind of genius may be needful to discover the law, but being discovered, it throws back light on itself, and commends itself unto all. And there is this other point of similarity also; it is a proof that we have found the law, when it explains *all* the phenomena, and not merely some, if, sooner or later, they all marshal themselves in order under it; so it is good evidence that we have discovered the right interpretation of a parable, if it leave none of the main circumstances unexplained. A false interpretation will inevitably betray itself, since it will “invariably paralyse and render nugatory some important member of an entire account.” If we have the right key in our hand, not merely some of the wards, but all, will have their corresponding parts, and moreover, the key will turn without grating or over-much forcing; and if we have the right interpretation, it will scarcely need to be defended and made plausible with great appliance of learning, to be propped up by remote allusions to Rabbinical or profane literature, by illustrations drawn from the recesses of antiquity.\*

Once more: the parables may not be made first sources

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of the parable, which is worth noticing. There are three things, he says, which, in proceeding to interpret it, claim our attention; the *radix*, or root out of which it grows, which may also be regarded as the final cause or scope with which it is spoken, which is to be looked for in the *προμήθιον*; next, the *cortex*, or the outward sensuous array in which it clothes itself; and then the *medulla*, or inward core, the spiritual truth which it enfolds.

\* That which is required in a satisfactory solution, is well stated by Teelman (*Comm. in Luc. xvi. 23*): *Explicatio non sit hiulca, non aspera, non auribus nec iudicio difficilis, non ridicula; sed mollis et verecunda, leniter manantis fluvii instar amenitate in aures auditorumque iudicium influens, appropriata, proxima, et ab omni longâ petitione remota.*

and seats of doctrine. Doctrines otherwise and already established may be illustrated, or indeed further confirmed by them; but it is not allowable to constitute doctrine first by their aid.\* They may be the outer ornamental fringe, but not the main texture, of the proof. For from the literal to the figurative, from the clearer to the more obscure, has been ever recognized as the order of Scripture interpretation. This rule, however, has been often forgotten, and controversialists, looking round for arguments with which to sustain some weak position, one for which they can find no other support in Scripture, often invent for themselves supports in these. Thus Bellarmine presses the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the circumstance that in that the thieves are said *first* to have stripped the traveller, and *afterwards* to have inflicted wounds on him, as proving certain views of the Romish Church on the order of man's fall, the succession in which, first losing heavenly gifts, the robe of a divine righteousness, he afterwards, and as a consequence, endured actual hurts in his soul.† And in the same way Faustus Socinus argues from the parable

\* This rule finds its expression in the recognized axiom. *Theologia parabolica non est argumentativa*;—and again: *Ex solo sensu litterali peti possunt argumenta efficacia* (see GERHARD'S *Loc. Theol.* ii. 13, 202). There is a beautiful passage in ANSELM'S *Cur Deus Homo*, i. 4. on the futility of using as primary arguments, and against gainsayers most of all, what indeed can but serve as the graceful confirmation of truths already on other grounds received and believed. An objector is made to reply to one who presses him with the wonderful correspondencies of Scripture: *Omnia hæc pulchra et quasi quædam picturæ suscipienda sunt: sed si non sit aliquid solidum super quod sedeant, non videntur infidelibus satisfacere: nam qui picturam vult facere, aliquid eligit solidum super quod pingat, ut maneat quod pingit. Nemo enim pingit in aquâ vel in aëre; quia ibi nulla manent picturæ vestigia. Qua propter cum has convenientias quas dicis, infidelibus quasi quasdam picturas rei gestæ obtendimus, quoniam non rem gestam sed figmentum arbitrantur esse quod credimus; quasi super nubem pingere nos existimant. Monstranda est prius veritatis rationabilis soliditas. Deinde, ut ipsum quasi corpus veritatis plus niteat, istæ convenientiæ, quasi picturæ corporis sunt exponendæ.*

† *De Grat. Prim. Hom.*: Neque enim sine causâ Dominus in parabolâ illâ prius dixit, hominem spoliatum, posterius autem, vulnèratum fuisse, cum tamen contra accidere soleat in veris latrociniiis; nimirum indicare voluit, in hoc spirituali latrocinio ex ipsâ amissione justitiæ

of the Unmerciful Servant, that as the king pardoned his servant merely on his petition (Matt. xviii. 22), and not on account of any satisfaction made, or any mediator intervening, we may draw from this the conclusion, that in the same way, and without requiring sacrifice or intercessor, God will pardon *his* debtors simply on the ground of their prayers.\*

But by much the greatest offenders against this rule were the Gnostics and Manichæans in old time, and especially the former. The whole scheme of the Gnostics was one, which, however it may have been a result of the Gospel, inasmuch as that set the religious speculation of the world vigorously astir, was yet of independent growth; and they only came to the Scripture to find a varnish, an outer Christian colouring, for a system essentially antichristian;—they came, not to learn its language, but to see if they could not compel it to speak theirs; † with no desire to draw *out of* Scripture its meaning, but only to thrust *into* Scripture their own. ‡ When they fell thus to picking and choosing from it what they might best

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originalis nata esse vulnera nostræ naturæ (see GERHARD's *Loc. Theol.* ix. 2, 86). His fact is inaccurate, for eastern robbers are careful to strip, if possible, before they slay; that so the wounds and blood may not injure the garments, often the most precious portion of the spoil.

\* DEYLING, *Obs. Sac.* vol. iv. p. 649. Socinus here sins against another rule of Scripture interpretation as of common sense, which is, that we are not to expect *in every place* the whole circle of Christian truth to be fully stated, and that no conclusion may be drawn from the absence of a doctrine from one passage, which is clearly stated in others. Thus Jerome (*Adv. Jovin.* 2): Neque enim in omnibus locis decetur omnia; sed unaque que similitudo ad id refertur cujus est similitudo.

† Jerome: Ad voluntatem suam Scripturam trahere repugnantem.

‡ Irenæus (*Con. Hæ.* i. 8): Ut figmentum illorum non sine teste esse videatur. All this very nearly repeats itself in Swedenborg, in whom, indeed, there are many resemblances to the Gnostics of old, especially the distinctive one of a division of the Church into spiritual and carnal members. One, estimating his system of Scripture interpretation, thus speaks: "His spiritual sense of Scripture is one altogether disconnected from the literal sense, is rather a sense before the sense; not a sense to which one mounts up from the steps of that which is below, but in which one must, as by a miracle, be planted, for it is altogether independent of, and disconnected from, the accidental *externum superadditum* of the literal sense."

turn to their ends, the parables naturally invited them almost more than any other portions of Scripture; for it was plain that they must abandon the literal portions of Scripture; they could find no colour for their scheme in them; their only refuge was in the figurative, in those which might receive more interpretations than one; such, perhaps, they might bend to their purposes. Accordingly, we find them revelling in these; with no joy, indeed, in them, on account of their simplicity, or practical depth, or ethical beauty; for they seem to have had no sense or feeling of these; but delighted to superinduce upon them their own capricious and extravagant fancies. Irenæus is continually compelled to vindicate the parables against these, and to rescue them from the extreme abuse to which they submitted them; for, indeed, they not merely warped and drew them a little aside, but made them tell wholly a different tale from that which they were intended to tell.\* Against these Gnostics he lays down that canon, namely, that the parables cannot be in any case the primary, nor yet the exclusive, foundations of any doctrine, but must be themselves interpreted according to the analogy of faith; since, if every subtle solution of one of these might raise itself at once to the dignity and authority of a Christian doctrine, the rule of faith would be nowhere. So to build, as he shows, were to build not on the rock, but on the sand.†

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\* In a striking passage (*Con. Hær.* i. 8) he likens their dealing with Scripture, their violent transpositions of it till it became altogether a different thing in their hands, to the fraud of those who should break up some work of exquisite mosaic, wrought by a skilful artificer to present the effigy of a king, and should then recompose the pieces upon some wholly different plan, and make them to express some vile image of a fox or dog, hoping that, since they could point to the stones as being the same, they should be able to persuade the simple that thus was the king's image still.

† Thus *Con. Hær.* ii. 27: Et ideo parabolæ debent non ambiguis adaptari: sic enim et qui absolvit sine periculo absolvit, et parabolæ ab omnibus similiter absolutionem accipient: et a veritate corpus integrum, et simili aptatione membrorum et sine concussionem perseverat. Sed quæ non aperte dicta sunt, neque ante oculos posita, copulare absolutionibus parolarum, quas unusquisque prout vult adinvenit [stultum est]. Sic enim apud nullum erit regula veritatis,

Tertullian has the same conflict to maintain. The whole scheme of the Gnostics, as he observes, was a great floating cloud-palace, the figment of their own brain, with no counterpart in the actual world of realities. They could therefore shape or mould it as they would; and thus they found no difficulty in forcing the parables to be upon their side. For they readily modified their scheme, shaping their doctrine according to the leadings and suggestions of these, till they brought the two into apparent agreement with one another. There was nothing to hinder them here; their creed was not a fixed body of divine truth, to which they could neither add nor take away, which was given them from above, and in which they could only acquiesce: but it was an invention of their own, and they could shape, fashion, and alter it as they pleased, and as best suited their purposes. We, as Tertullian often says, are kept within limits in the exposition of the parables, accepting, as we do, the other Scriptures as the rule to us of truth, as the rule, therefore, of their interpretation. It is otherwise with these heretics; their doctrine is their own; they can first dexterously adapt it to the parables, and then bring forward this adaptation as a testimony of its truth.\*

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sed quanti fuerint qui absolvent parabolas, tantæ videbuntur veritates pugnantes semet invicem. So too 3: Quia autem parabolaë possunt multas recipere absolutiones, ex ipsis de inquisitione Dei affirmare, relinquentes quod certum et indubitatum et verum est, valde præcipitantum se in periculum et irrationabilium esse, quis non amantium veritatem confitebitur? et numquid hoc est non in petrâ firmâ et validâ et in aperto positâ ædificare suam domum, sed in incertum effusæ arenæ? Unde et facilis est eversio hujusmodi ædificationis. Cf. ii. 10; and for an example of what they were able to bring out of a parable, see the explanations of the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Piece of Money, i. 16. The miracles were submitted by them to the same process of interpretation (see i. 7, and ii. 24).

\* *De Pudicitia*, viii. 9. Among much else which is interesting, he says, Hæretici parabolas quo volunt trahunt, non quo debent, aptissime excludunt [his image is from the workers in gold or other metals; called exclusores (see Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* liv. 22) from *excludere*, to strike or stamp out (Du Cange, s. v.). This meaning of the word *excludere* is wanting in SCHELLER'S *Dictionary*]. Quare aptissime? Quoniam a primordio secundum occasiones parabolarum, ipsas materias confinxerunt doctrinæ. Vacavit scilicet illis solutis a

As it was with the Gnostics of the early Church, exactly so was it with the sects which, in a later day, were their spiritual successors, the Cathari and Bogomili. They, too, found in the parables no teaching about sin and grace and redemption, no truths of the kingdom of God, but fitted to them the speculations about the creation, the origin of evil, the fall of angels, which were uppermost in their own minds; which they had not drawn from Scripture; but which having themselves framed, they afterwards turned to Scripture to see if there was not something there which they could compel to fall into their scheme. Thus, the apostasy of Satan and his drawing after him a part of the host of heaven, they found set forth by the parable of the Unjust Steward. Satan was the chief steward over God's house, whom He deposed from his place of highest trust, and who then drew after him the other angels, with the suggestion of lighter tasks and relief from the burden of their imposed duties.\*

But to come to more modern times. Though not testifying to evils at all so grave in the devisers of the scheme, nor leading altogether out of the region of Christian truth, yet sufficiently injurious to the sober interpretation of the parables, is such a theory concerning them as that entertained, and in actual exposition carried out by Cocceius and his followers of what we may call the historico-prophetical school. By the

regulâ veritatis, ea conquirere atque componere, quorum parabolæ videntur. Thus too, *De Præsc. Hæret.* 8. Valentinus non ad materiam Scripturas, sed materiam ad Scripturas, excogitavit.

\* NEANDER, *Kirch. Gesch.* vol. v. p. 1082. 'They dealt more perversely, and at the same time more characteristically still, with the parable of the Servant that owed the ten thousand talents (*Ibid.* vol. v. p. 1122): This servant, too, with whom the king reckons, is Satan or the Demiurgus; his wife and children whom the king orders to be sold, the first is Sophia or intelligence, the second the angels subject to him. God pitied him, and did not take from him his higher intelligence, his subjects, or his goods; he promising, if God would have patience with him, to create so great a number of men as should supply the place of the fallen angels. Therefore God gave him permission that for six days, the six thousand years of the present world, he should bring to pass what he could with the world which he had created—but this will suffice.

parables, they say, and so far they have right, are declared the mysteries of the kingdom of God. But then, interpreting those words, "kingdom of God," in far too exclusive a sense, they are determined to find in every one of the parables a part of the history of that kingdom's progressive development in the world to the latest times. They will not allow any to be merely ethical, but affirm all to be historico-prophetical. Thus, to let one of them speak for himself in the remarkable words of Krummacher :\* "The parables of Jesus have not primarily a moral, but a politico-religious, or theocratic purpose. To use a comparison, we may consider the kingdom of God carried forward under his guidance, as the action, gradually unfolding itself, of an Epos, of which the first germ lay prepared long beforehand in the Jewish economy of the Old Testament, but which through Him began to unfold itself, and will continue to do so to the end of time. The name and superscription of the Epos is, THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The parables belong essentially to the Gospel of the kingdom, not merely as containing its doctrine, but its progressive development. They connect themselves with certain fixed periods of that development, and, as soon as these periods are completed, lose themselves in the very completion ; that is, considered as independent portions of the Epos, remaining for us only in the image and external letter." He must mean, of course, in the same manner and degree as all other fulfilled prophecy ; in the light of such accomplished prophecy, he would say, they must henceforth be regarded.

Boyle gives some, though a very moderate, countenance to the same opinion : "Some, if not most, do, like those oysters that, besides the meat they afford us, contain pearls, not only include excellent moralities, but comprise important prophecies ;" and, having adduced the Mustard Seed and the Wicked Husbandman as plainly containing such prophecies, he goes on, "I despair not to see unheeded prophecies disclosed in

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\* Not the Krummacher lately so popular in England, but his father, himself the author of a volume of very graceful original parables.



others of them.”\* Vitringa’s *Elucidation of the Parables*† is a practical application of this theory, and one which will scarcely win many supporters for it. Thus, the servant owing the ten thousand talents (Matt. xviii. 23), is the Pope or line of Popes, placed in highest trust in the Church, but who, misusing the powers committed to them, were warned by the invasion of Goths, Lombards, and other barbarians, of judgment at the door, and indeed seemed given into their hands for punishment; but being mercifully delivered from this fear of imminent destruction at the time of Charlemagne, so far from repenting and amending, on the contrary now more than ever oppressed and maltreated the true servants of God, and who therefore should be delivered over to an irreversible doom. He gives a yet more marvellous explanation of the Merchant seeking goodly pearls, this pearl of price being the church of Geneva! and the doctrine of Calvin, opposed to all the abortive pearls, that is, to all the other Reformed Churches. Other examples may be found in Cocceius—an interpretation, for instance, of the Ten Virgins, after this same fashion.‡ Deyling has an interesting essay on this school of interpreters,

\* *On the Style of the Holy Scriptures; Fifth Objection.* There is nothing new, however, in this scheme; for it is evident from many passages, that Origen had very much the same belief. I would refer particularly to what he says on the Labourers in the Vineyard (*Comm. in Matt* xx), where he seems to toil under the sense of some great undisclosed mystery concerning the future destinies of the kingdom of God, lying hidden in that parable. St. Ambrose (*Apolog. Alt. David*, 57) gives a strange historico-prophetical interpretation of Nathan’s parable of the Ewe Lamb; and Hippolytus (*De Antichristo*, 57) of the Unjust Judge.

† *Erklärung der Parabeln*—Being published, not like most of his other works in Latin, but originally in Dutch, it is far less known, as indeed it deserves to be, than his other oftentimes very valuable works. I have made use of a German translation, Frankfort, 1717. The volume consists of more than a thousand rather closely-printed pages, with exceedingly little grain to be winnowed out from a most unreasonable proportion of chaff.

‡ *Schol. in Matt.* xxv. More are to be found in GÜRTLER’s *Syst. Theol. Proph.*; as at pp. 542, 676. Deusingius, Teelman, D’Outrein, Solomon Van Till, may be named among the other chief writers of this school.

and passes a severe, though certainly not undeserved, condemnation on them.\* Prophetical, no doubt, many of the parables are; for they declare how the new element of life, which the Lord was bringing into men's hearts and into the world, would work—the future influences and results of his doctrine—that the little mustard-seed would grow to a great tree—that the leaven would continue working till it had leavened the whole lump. But they declare not so much the *facts* as the *laws* of the kingdom, or the facts only so far as, by giving insight into the laws, they impart a knowledge of the facts. Historico-prophetical are only a few; as that of the Wicked Husbandman, which Boyle adduced, in which there is a clear prophecy of the death of Christ; as that of the Marriage of the King's Son, in which there is an equally clear announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the transfer of the privileges of the kingdom of God from the Jews to the Gentiles. But this subject will again present itself to us, when we consider, in their relation to one another, the seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew.

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\* *Obs. Sac* vol v p 331, seq. He notes how the same scheme of interpretation has been applied by the same school of interpreters to the miracles. Various examples of this may be found in LAMPE's *Commentary on St John*,—see, for instance, on the feeding of the five thousand (John vi). They form the weakest side of a book which contains in other respects much that is admirable.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ON OTHER PARABLES BESIDES THOSE IN THE SCRIPTURES.

THE most perfect specimens of this form of composition, and those by which the comparative value of all other in the like kind is to be measured, must be sought in that Book which is the most perfect of all books; yet they do not belong exclusively to it. The parable, as St. Jerome has noted, is among the favourite vehicles for conveying moral truth throughout all the East. Our Lord took possession of it, honoured it by making it his own, by using it as the vehicle for the very highest truth of all. But there were parables before the parables which issued from his lips. It seems to belong to our subject to say a little concerning those, which, though they did not give the pattern to, yet preceded his—concerning those also which were formed more or less immediately on the suggestion and in imitation of his, on the Jewish, that is, and the Christian.

The Jewish parables will occupy us first. Some, indeed, have denied, but in the face of evident facts, that this method of teaching by parables was current among the Jews before our Saviour's time. They have feared, it would seem, lest it should detract from his glory to suppose that He had availed himself of a manner of teaching already in use. Yet surely the anxiety of which this is a specimen, to cut off the Lord's teaching from all living connexion with his age and country, is very idle; and the suspicion with which parallels from the uninspired Jewish writings have been regarded, is altogether misplaced. It is the same anxiety which would cut off the Mosaic legislation and institutions altogether from Egypt;\*

\* The attempt fails even when made by so able and learned a man as Witsius. It is not from grounds such as he occupies in his *Ægyptiaca*, that books like SPENCER'S *De Legibus Hebræorum* can be answered.

which cannot with honesty be done, and which, in truth, there is no object whatever in attempting. For if Christianity be indeed the world-religion, it must gather into one all dispersed rays of light; it must appropriate to itself all elements of truth which are anywhere scattered abroad, not thus adopting what is alien, but rather claiming what is its own.\* There cannot be a doubt that our blessed Lord so spake, as that his doctrine, in its outward garb, should commend itself to his countrymen. There were inner obstacles enough to their receiving of it; and therefore the greater need that outwardly it should be attractive. Thus, He appealed to proverbs in common use among them. He quoted the traditional speeches of their elder Rabbis, to refute, to enlarge, or to correct them. When He found the theological terms of their schools capable of bearing the burden of the new truth which He laid upon them, He willingly used them;† and in using, did not deny their old meaning, yet at the same time glorified and transformed it into something far higher. He used them; but He who made all things new, and all whose words were creative, breathed into them in the using a new spirit of life. “Thy kingdom come” formed already a part of the Jewish liturgy, yet not the less was it a new prayer on the lips of all who had realized in any measure the idea of the kingdom, and what was signified by the coming of that kingdom, as *He* first had enabled them to realize it. So “Peace be unto you” was no doubt an ordinary salutation among the Jews long before, yet having how much deeper a significance, and one how entirely new upon his lips, who *is* our Peace, and who, first causing us to enter ourselves into the

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\* In the words of Clemens (*Strom.* i. 13): *Δυνατὴ ἡ ἀλήθεια συναγαγεῖν τὰ οἰκεῖα σπέρματα, κἂν εἰς τὴν ἀλλοδαπὴν ἐκπέσῃ γῆν.*

† There is an interesting essay in this point of view by Schoettgen (*Hor. Heb.* vol. ii. p. 883), with the title, *Christus Rabbīnorum summus*. In the same way the whole coloring of Ezekiel's visions, and the symbols which he uses, are Persian and Babylonian throughout, they belong, that is, to the world in which he lived and moved: yet the distinction remains as wide as ever between a Magian or Chaldean soothsayer and a prophet of the living God.

peace of God, enabled us truly to wish peace, and to speak peace, to our brethren. So, too, a proselyte was in the Jewish schools entitled "a new creature," and his passing over to Judaism was "a new birth;"\* yet were these terms used, as far as we can see, to express a change in his outward relations only: it remained for Christ to appropriate them to the higher mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Nor less is it certain that the illustrating of doctrines by the help of parables, or briefer comparisons, was greatly in use among the Jewish teachers,† so that it might almost be said of them as of Him, that without a parable they spake nothing. The very formulas with which their parables were introduced remind us of those we meet in the Gospels; for instance, the question, "Whereunto shall I liken it?" is of continual recurrence. But what then? It was not in the newness of the forms, but in the newness of the spirit, that the transcendent glory and excellency of Christ's teaching consisted.

As some may not be displeased to see what these Jewish parables are like, I will quote, not, as some have done, the worst, but the best which I have had the fortune to meet. The following is occasioned by a question which has arisen—namely, Why the good so often die young? It is answered, that God foresees that if they lived they would fall into sin. "To what is this like? It is like a king who, walking in his garden, saw some roses which were yet buds, breathing an ineffable sweetness. He thought, 'If these shed such sweetness while yet they are buds, what will they do when they are fully blown?' After a while, the king entered the garden anew, thinking to find the roses now blown, and to delight himself with their fragrance; but arriving at the place, he found them pale and withered, and yielding no smell. He exclaimed with

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\* SCHOETTGEN's *Hor. Heb.* vol. i pp. 328, 704.

† VITRINGA. *De Synagoga*, p. 678, seq. Hillel and Schammai were the most illustrious teachers by parables before the time of our Saviour; R. Meir immediately after. With this last, as the tradition goes, the power of inventing parables notably declined. This is not hard to understand. The fig-tree of the Jewish people was withered, and could put forth no fruit any more (Matt. xxi. 19).

regret, 'Had I gathered them while yet tender and young, and while they gave forth their sweetness, I might have delighted myself with them, but now I have no pleasure in them.' The next year the king walked in his garden, and finding rosebuds scattering fragrance, he commanded his servants, 'Gather them, that I may enjoy them before they wither, as last year they did.' " \*—The next is ingenious enough, though a notable specimen of Jewish self-righteousness: "A man had three friends: being summoned to appear before the king, he was terrified, and looked for an advocate: the first, whom he had counted the best, altogether refused to go with him; another replied that he would accompany him to the door of the palace, but could not speak for him; the third, whom he had held in least esteem, appeared with him before the king, and pleaded for him so well as to procure his deliverance. So every man has three friends, when summoned by death before God, his Judge: the first, whom he prized, his money, will not go with him a step; the second, his friends and kinsmen, accompany him to the tomb, but no further, nor can they deliver him in the judgment; while the third, whom he had in least esteem, the Law and good works, appear with him before the king, and deliver him from condemnation." †—But this is in a nobler strain; it is suggested by those words, "In thy light shall we see light." "As a man travelling by night kindled his torch, which, when it was extinguished, he again lit, and again, but at length exclaimed, 'How long shall I weary myself in my way? better to wait till the sun arise, and when the sun is shining I will pursue my journey,'—so the Israelites were oppressed in Egypt, but delivered by Moses and Aaron. Again,

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\* SCHOETTGEN's *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 682.

† *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 1129. How different this view of the Law as an advocate with the Judge, from our Lord's (Matt. v. 25, 26), who compares it to an adversary dragging us before a tribunal where we are certain to be worsted! This parable, like so much else that is to be found in the Rabbinical books, reappears in many quarters; in the Eastern Romance, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, 13; and among the traditional sayings of Mahomet (see VON HAMMER's *Fundgruben d. Orients*, vol. i. p. 315).

they were subdued by the Babylonians, when Chaniah, Misael, and Azariah delivered them. Again, they were subdued by the Grecians, when Mattathias and his sons helped them. At length the Romans overcame them, when they cried to God, 'We are weary with the continual alternation of oppression and deliverance; we ask no further that mortal man may shine upon us, but God, who is holy and blessed for ever.'"<sup>\*</sup>—There is a fine one of the fox, which, seeing the fish in great trouble, darting hither and thither, while the stream was being drawn with nets, proposed to them to leap on dry land. This is put in a Rabbi's mouth, who, when the Græco-Syrian kings were threatening with death all who observed the law, was counselled by his friends to abandon it. He would say, "We, like the fish in the stream, are indeed in danger now, but yet, while we continue in obedience to God, we are in our element; but if, to escape the danger, we forsake that, then we inevitably perish."<sup>†</sup>—Again, there is one of much tenderness, to explain why a proselyte is dearer to the Lord than even a Levite. Such proselyte is compared to a wild goat, which, brought up in a desert, joins itself freely to the flock, and which is cherished by the shepherd with especial love; since, that his flock, which from its youth he had put forth in the morning and brought back at evening, should love him, was nothing strange; but that the goat, brought up in deserts and mountains, should attach itself to him, demanded an especial return of affection.<sup>‡</sup>—There are besides these a multitude of briefer ones, deserving the title of *similitudes* rather than of *parables*. Thus there is one, urging collection of spirit in prayer, to this effect:—"If a man brought a request to an

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<sup>\*</sup> SCHOETTGEN'S *Hor Heb.* vol. ii. p. 691.

<sup>†</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 189.

<sup>‡</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 377. This too on the resurrection is good (COCCEIUS, *Excerpt. Gem.* p. 232): R Ammin replied to a Sadducee who said, Numquid pulvis vivet?—Rem tibi hanc parabolâ explicabo. Rex quidam jusserat a servis suis palatium in loco, qui aquâ et limo careret, extrui. Factum. Eo collapsio, jussit id reedificari in loco ubi utriusque erat copia. Negant se posse. Tum ille iratus, Quum abesset aqua et limus, potuistis; nunc quum utrumque adsit, non possetis?

earthly monarch, but, instead of making it, were to turn aside and talk with his neighbour, might not the king be justly displeased?"\*—In another, the death common to all, and the doom after death so different to each, is likened to a king's retinue entering a city at a single gate, but afterward lodged within it very differently, according to their several dignity.†—There is a singular one, to explain why God has not told which command should have the greatest reward for its keeping.‡—In another it is shown how body and soul are partners in sin, and so will justly be partners in punishment.§

These, among the Jewish parables, with two or three more, which, bearing some resemblance to evangelical parables, will be noted in their due places, are the most memorable which I have met. Even where the resemblance is strongest, I think it will be acknowledged that it is one lying merely on the surface, and nothing so extraordinary as some writers have given out. Some, indeed, have thought the similarity so great, as that it needed in one way or another to be accounted for, and have supposed that our Lord adopted those which He

\* SCHOETTGEN's *Hor Heb.* vol. i. p. 656. The same comparison with slight variation occurs in Chrysostom, *Hom. 1, in Ozam*, and again with further modification, *Hom. 51, in Matt.*

† SCHOETTGEN's *Hor Heb.* vol. i. p. 388.

‡ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 187.

§ COCCEIUS (*Excerpt Gem.* p. 232). Antoninus cum R. Jehudâ sancto sic colloquutus aliquando est Corpus, inquit, et anima a judicio se liberare possunt. Quomodo? Corpus dicat, Anima peccavit, nam ex quo illa a me discessit, ecce lapidis instar sine sensu in sepulcro jacui. Anima autem dicat, Corpus peccavit, nam ex quo illius laxata sum nexu, ecce volito per aerem aviculæ in morem. Ad hæc Rabbi, Parabolam, inquit, tibi dabo. Rex mortalis horto cuidam amœnissimo, in quo maturi fructus essent, duos custodes apposuit, claudum et cæcum. Claudus, visis fructibus, cæcum admonuit, ipsum uti in humeros reciperet, quo illos decerneret, et illi inter se devorarent. Insedit igitur claudus cæci cervicibus, decerptosque fructus absumserunt. Aliquanto post tempore venit dominus horti et de fructibus requisivit. Cum cæcus, sibi oculos non esse ut videret, et claudus, sibi pedes deesse ut accederet. Quid ille? Quum jussisset hunc illius humeris excipi, utrumque simul judicavit et plexit. Consimiliter faciet Deus: animâ corporâ indit, pariter animam et corpus judicabit.



found in any way fitted for his purpose, remodelling them and improving them as they passed under his hands. Others suppose that the Jewish parables are of later origin than those in the Gospels, and that the Rabbis, while they searched the Christian books for the purpose of ridiculing or gainsaying them, enriched themselves with their spoils, borrowing sayings and narrations which they afterwards used, concealing carefully the source from whence they were derived.\* But neither of these suppositions is necessary. Lightfoot has a collection of such sayings under the title: *Wit stolen by the Jews out of the Gospel*;† but neither here, nor in the parallels elsewhere adduced, is the resemblance so striking as to carry any persuasion to my mind, of the necessity, or even the probability, of a common origin. The hatred and scorn with which the Jews regarded the sacred books of the Christians, a hatred extending to all foreign literature, but felt with especial force in regard to them,‡ makes this last supposition extremely improbable.

The resemblance, after all, is merely such as must needs have found place, or at least could with difficulty have been avoided, when the same external life, and the same outward nature, were used as the common storehouse, from whence images, illustrations, and examples were drawn alike by all. Perhaps it will be as well at once to consider one, and one of the best, among these Talmudical parables, which pretend to any similarity with our Lord's. It has been sometimes likened to that later part of the Marriage of the King's Son, which relates to the wedding garment. "The Rabbis have delivered what follows, on Eccl. xii. 7, where it is written, 'The spirit shall return unto God who gave it.'—He gave it to thee unspotted, see that thou restore it unspotted to Him again. It is like a mortal king, who distributed royal vestments to his servants. Then those that were wise, folded them carefully

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\* So Carpzow, Storr, Lightfoot, and Pfeiffer (*Theol. Jud. atque Mohamm.* th. 40-48).

† *Erubhin*, chap. 20.

‡ GFRÖRER'S *Urchristenthum*, vol. i. p. 115, seq.

up, and laid them by in the wardrobe; but those that were foolish went their way, and, clothed in these garments, engaged in their ordinary work. After a while, the king required his garments again: the wise returned them white as they had received them; but the foolish, soiled and stained. Then the king was well pleased with the wise, and said, 'Let the vestments be laid up in the wardrobe, and let these depart in peace;' but he was angry with the foolish, and said, 'Let the vestments be given to be washed, and those servants be cast into prison:'—so will the Lord do with the bodies of the righteous, as it is written, *Isai. lvii. 2*; with their souls, *1 Sam. xxv. 29*; but with the bodies of the wicked, *Isai. xlviii. 22*; *lvii. 21*; and with their souls, *1 Sam. xxv. 29*.\* But, with the exception of a king appearing in each, and the praise and condemnation turning on a garment, what resemblance is there here? In fact, if we penetrate a little below the surface, there is more real similarity between this parable and that of the Talents, as in each case there is the restoration of a deposit, and a dealing with the servants according to their conduct in respect of that deposit. But then, how remote a likeness! How capricious everything here! The distributing of garments which were not to be worn, and afterwards reclaiming them,—what analogy has this to anything in actual life?†—

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\* MEUSCHEN, *N. T. ex Talm. illust* p. 117, see others, pp. 111, 194, 195; and more in WETSTEIN'S *N. T.* pp 727, 765. Those given by Otto, a converted Jew, who afterwards relapsed into Judaism, in a book entitled *Gah Razia*, have been tampered with by him for the purpose of making the resemblance between them and the Evangelical parables more close, else they would be remarkable indeed (PREIFFER'S *Theol. Jud.* th. 39).

† This, with so many other of the rabbinical parables, sins almost against every rule given as needful to be observed in such an invented tale, if it is to carry any power of conviction with it, by the author of the treatise *Ad Herennium*, i 9: *Verisimilis narratio erit, si ut mos, ut opinio, ut natura postulat, dicemus; si spatia temporum, personarum dignitates, consiliorum rationes, locorum opportunitates constabunt, ne refelli possit, aut temporis parum fuisse, aut causam nullam, aut locum idoneum non fuisse, aut homines ipsos facere aut pati non potuisse.* But how wonderfully do all these requisites meet in the parables of the New Testament!

how different from the probability that a nobleman, going into a distant country, should distribute his goods to his servants, and returning, demand from them an account.\*

This much in regard to the Jewish parables.† Among the Fathers of the Christian Church there are not many, as far as I am aware, who have professedly constructed parables for the setting forth of spiritual mysteries. Two or three such parables are to be found in the *Shepherd* of Hermas. The whole of its third book is indeed parabolical, as it sets forth spiritual truth under sensuous images, only it does this chiefly in visions, that is, in parables for the eye rather than for the ear. There are, however, parables in the strictest sense of the word; this, for example,‡ which is an improved form of the rabbinical parable last quoted: "Restore to the Lord the spirit entire as thou hast received it: for if thou gavest to a fuller a garment which was entire, and desiredst so to receive it again, but the fuller restored it to thee rent, wouldest thou receive it? wouldest thou not say in anger, 'I delivered to thee my garment entire, wherefore hast thou torn it and made it useless? It is now, on account of the rent which thou hast made in it, of no more service to me.' If thou then grieveest for thy garment, and complainest because thou receivest it not entire again, how, thinkest thou, will the Lord deal with thee, who gave thee a perfect spirit, but which spirit thou hast marred, so that it can be of no more service to its Lord? for it became useless when it was corrupted by thee." There are several parables, formally brought forward as such, in the writings of Ephraem Syrus,

\* Unger (*De Parab. Jes Nat.* p. 162) observes that he has gone into this comparison of the Evangelical with the Jewish parables,—Partim ut abstereremur a solito rabbinicos locos doctrinæ Jesu quodammodo æquiparandi pruritu ac levitate, interdum ad interpretationem juvandam parum utili, . . . partim ut inde magis agnosceremus parabolarum Jesu præstantiam.

† There are no parables in the apocryphal gospels. Indeed, where a moral element is altogether wanting, as in these worthless forgeries, it was only to be expected that this, as every other form of communicating spiritual truth, should be looked for in vain.

‡ *Simil.* ix. 32, cf. *Simil.* v. 2.

but such of these as I am acquainted with, are very far from felicitous; indeed they could scarcely be tamer than they are.\* Origen has what may be termed a parable, and a very striking one, by which he seeks to illustrate the peculiar character and method of St. Paul's teaching; its riches, its depths, its obscurities, its vast truths, only partially shown by him, and therefore only partially seen by us. The great characteristics of the Apostle's teaching have not often been so happily seized. This parable is very fitly introduced in Origen's commentary on the Romans, and on chap. v. 12-21.†

\* This is the best that I know, of which, however, I only judge in its Latin translation: Duo homines proficiscebantur ad quandam civitatem, quæ stadis aberat trigiinta. Cum autem jam duo aut tria confecissent stadia, obtulit se in viâ locus, in quo sylvæ et arbores erant umbrosæ, fluentaque aquarum, multaque ibidem delectatio. Qui dum contemplerentur ista, alter quidem ad urbem spectandam contendens, instar cursoris locum præteribat; alter vero, cum constitisset ut contempleretur, remansit. Deinde cum prodire jam vellet extra arborum umbram, calores timuit, atque ita diutius ibidem loci dum remaneret, locique simul amœnitate sese delectaret atque occuparet, bestia ex iis quæ in sylvâ commorantur prodiit, apprehensumque ipsum pertraxit in suum antum: alter vero, qui neque iter neglexisset, neque formâ arborum se detineri passus esset, rectâ ad urbem perrexit. See also *Paranes* xxi 28.

† Videtur mihi Apostolus Paulus in his præcipue locis quæ nunc habentur in manibus, ita quodam modo hæc loqui, velut si quis fidelis famulus et prudens a rege magno et domino suo introducatur in thesauros regios, et ostendantur ei diversa et magna domicilia, quorum aditus varii sint et incerti, ita ut ei per alium ingressus, et per alium monstraretur egressus, interdum autem ex diversis ingressibus ad unum conclave veniatur; ostendatur etiam huic qui circumducitur fidei famulo thesaurus argenti regii, et alius auri, lapidum quoque et margaritarum, variorumque monilium, purpuræ etiam regis locus, et alius diadematum; demonstrentur adhuc reginæ thalami in multis diversisque mansionibus positi, et tamen singula hæc non penitus ad integrum patentibus januis reserentur, sed ex parte subapertis, ita ut agnoscat quidem thesauros dominicos et regias opes, nec tamen ad liquidum et ad perfectum singula quæque cognoscat. Post hæc vero iste servus, qui tam fidelis habitus est, ut ei rex et dominus opum suarum magnitudinem fecerit innotescere, mittatur ut exercitum congreget regi, delectum habeat, milites probet; pro eo quidem quia fidelis est, ut plures invitet ad militandum, et majorem exercitum congreget regi, necessitatem patietur proferre ex parte quæ viderit; et rursum quia prudens est, et scit necessarium esse abscondere mysterium regis, indicibus quibusdam magis quam relationibus utetur, ita ut potentia quidem regis, ordinis autem atque ornatus palatii et ha-

Eadmer, a disciple of Anselm, has preserved as it were a basket of fragments from his sermons and his table-talk. Among these there are so many of his similitudes and illustrations as to give a name to the whole collection.\* There are not a few complete parables here, though none perhaps of that beauty which the works that come directly from him might have led us to expect. Far better are those interspersed through the Greek religious romance of the seventh or eighth century, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, ascribed, I believe on no sufficient grounds, to John of Damascus, and often printed with his works. They have been justly admired,† yet more than one of them is certainly not original, being easily traced up to earlier sources. A very interesting one will be found in the note below.‡ Those which are entitled

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bitus occulta tamen maneat dispensatio. Ita ergo, ut dixi, videtur mihi etiam Apostolus Paulus in his sermonibus facere, &c.

\* *De S. Anselmi Similitudinibus*. It is published at the end of the Benedict. edit. of St. Anselm. I do not know whether I can find a better than this, upon the keeping of the heart with all diligence, of which, however, I can quote no more than is necessary for giving an insight into the whole (41). Cor etenim nostrum simile est molendino semper molenti, quod dominus quidam cuidam servo suo custodiendum dedit. præcipiens ei ut suum tantum annonam in eo molat, et ex eodem quod moluerit, ipse vivat. Verum illi servo quidam inimicatur, qui si quando illud vacuum invenerit, aut alienam ibi statim projicit, quæ illud dissipat; aut picam, quæ conglutinat; aut aliquid quod fœdat; aut paleam, quæ tantum illud occupat. Servus igitur ille si molendinum suum bene custodierit, dominique sui tantum annonam in illo moluerit, et domino suo servit, sibi que ipsi victum acquirit. Hoc itaque molendinum semper aliquid molens cor est humanum, assidue aliquid cogitans. Cf. 42, 46.

† See DUNLOP'S *History of Fiction*, London, 1845, p. 40, seq. Wunderschönen Parabeln, Rosenkranz (*Gesch. der Poesie*, vol. ii. p. 46) calls them. Cf. the *Wiener Jahrb.* 1824, pp. 26-45.

‡ Urbem quandam magnam exstitisse accepi, in qua cives hoc in more et instituto positum habebant, ut peregrinum quandam et ignotum virum ac legum et consuetudinum civitatis omnino rudem et ignarum acciperent, eumque sibi ipsis regem constituerent, penes quem per unius anni curriculum rerum omnium potestas esset, quique libere et sine ullo impedimento quicquid vellet, faceret. Post autem, dum ille omni prorsus curâ vacuus degeret, atque in luxu et deliciis sine ullo metu versaretur, perpetuumque sibi regnum fore existimaret, repente adversus eum insurgentes, regiamque ipsi vestem detrahentes, ac nudum per totam urbem tanquam in triumphum

parables in the writings of St. Bernard,\* which, whether they be his or no, have much of beauty and instruction in them, are rather allegories than parables, and so do not claim here to be considered.

But if parables, which are professedly such, are not of frequent occurrence in the works of the early Church writers, the parabolical element is, notwithstanding, very predominant in their teaching. This was only to be expected, especially in their homilies, which are popular in the truest and best sense of the word. What boundless stores, for instance, of happy illustration, which might with the greatest ease be thrown into the forms of parables, are laid up in the writings of St. Augustine. One is only perplexed, amid the endless variety, what instances to select: but we may take this one as an example. He is speaking of the Son of God and the

agentes, in magnam quandam et longe remotam insulam eum relegabant, in quâ nec victu nec indumentis suppetentibus, fame ac nuditate miserrime premebatur, voluptate scilicet atque animi hilaritate, quæ præter spem ipsi concessa fuerat, in mœrorem rursus præter spem omnem et expectationem commutatâ. Contigit ergo ut pro antiquo civium illorum more atque instituto vir quidam magno ingenii acumine præditus ad regnum ascisceretur. Qui statim subitâ eâ felicitate, quæ ipsi obtigerat, haudquaquam præceps abreptus, nec eorum qui ante se regiam dignitatem obtinuerant, misereque ejecti fuerant, incuriam imitatus, animo anxio et sollicito id agitabat, quoniam pacto rebus suis optime consulere. Dum ergo crebrâ meditatione hæc secum versaret, per sapientissimum quendam consiliarium de civium consuetudine ac perpetui exilii loco certior factus est: quoniam pacto sine ullo errore ipse sibi cavere deberet, intellexit. Cum igitur hoc cognovisset, futurumque propediem, ut ad illam insulam ablegaretur, atque adventitium illud et alienum regnum aliis relinqueret, patefactis thesauris suis, quorum tunc promptum ac liberum usum habebat, aurique atque argenti ac pretiosorum lapidum ingenti mole famulis quibusdam quos fidissimos habebat, traditâ, ad eam insulam, ad quam abducendus erat, præmisit. Vertente autem anno cives commotâ seditione nudum eum, quemadmodum superiores reges, in exilium miserunt. Ac ceteri quidem amentes, et brevis temporis reges, gravissimâ fame laborabant: ille contra qui opes suas præmiserat, in perpetuâ rerum copiâ vitam ducens, atque infinitâ voluptate fruens, perfidorum ac sceleratorum civium metu prorsus abjecto, sapientissimi consilii sui nomine beatum se prædicabat. Compare 1 Tim. vi. 19.

\* In the Benedictine edition, vol. i. p. 1251, seq.

sinner as in the same world, and appearing under the same conditions of humanity: "But," he proceeds, "how great a difference there is between the prisoner in his dungeon, and the visitor that has come to see him! They are both within the walls of the dungeon: one who did not know might suppose them under equal restraint, but one is the compassionate visitor, who can use his freedom when he will, the other is fast bound there for his offences. So great is the difference between Christ, the compassionate visitor of man, and man himself, the criminal in bondage for his offences."\* Or, rebuking them that dare in their ignorance to find fault with the arrangements of Providence: "If you entered the workshop of a blacksmith, you would not dare to find fault with his bellows, anvils, hammers. If you had—not the skill of the workman, but the consideration of a man, what would you say? 'It is not without cause the bellows are placed here; the artificer knew, though I do not know, the reason.' You would not venture to find fault with the blacksmith in his shop, and do you dare to find fault with God in the world?"† Chrysostom, too, is very rich in such similitudes, which need nothing to be parables, except that they should be presented for such; as for instance, when speaking of the exaltation of outward nature, the redemption of the creature, which shall accompany the manifestation of the sons of God, he says, "To what is the creation like? It is like a nurse that has brought up a royal child, and when he ascends his paternal throne, she too rejoices with him, and is partaker of the benefit."‡—But the field here opening before me is too wide to enter on.§ It is of parables, strictly so called, and

\* *In Ep. 1 Joh. Tract 2.*

† *Enarr. in Ps. 148.* He has something perhaps more nearly approaching in its form to a parable than either of these, *Enarr. in Ps. ciii. 26.*

‡ *Hom. in Rom. viii. 19.*

§ I will not, however, deny myself the pleasure of transcribing the following parable from H. de Sto Victore (*De Sacram. ii. pars, 14, 8*): Pater quidam contumacem filium quasi cum magno furore expulit, ut ita affictus humiliari disceret. Sed illo in contumaciâ suâ persistente, quâdam secretâ dispensatione consiliis a patre mater mittitur, ut non quasi a patre missa, sed quasi maternâ per se pietate ducta veniens

not all of these,\* but of such only as are found in the New Testament, that it is my wish to speak; and these I would now proceed severally and in order to consider.

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muliebri lenitate obstinatum demulceat, contumacem ad humilitatem flectat, vehementer patrem iratum nuntiet, se tamen interventuram spondeat, consilium salutis suggerat, . . . non nisi magnis precibus patrem placari posse dicat; causam tamen rei se suscepturam asserat, et ad bonam finem rem omnem se perducturam promittat. The mother here he presently explains as divine Grace.—Readers that have at hand POIRET's remarkable work, *Economia Divina*, may find a parable (vol. ii. p. 554), v. 9, 26, which is too long to quote, but is worthy a reference; and another in SALMERON's *Serm. in Parab. Evang.* p. 300.

\* One Persian, however, I will quote for its deep significance. I take it from DESLONGCHAMP's *Fables Indiennes*, p. 64. The Persian moralist is speaking of the manner in which frivolous and sensual pleasures cause men to forget all the deeper interests of their spiritual being. On ne peut mieux assimiler le genre humain qu'à un homme qui, fuyant un éléphant funeux, est descendu dans un puits, il s'est accroché à deux rameaux qui en couvrent l'orifice; et ses pieds se sont posés sur quelque chose qui forme une saillie dans l'intérieur du même puits: ce sont quatre serpents qui sortent leurs têtes hors de leur repaires il aperçoit au fond du puits un dragon qui gueule ouverte n'attend que l'instant de sa chute pour le dévorer. Ses regards se portent vers les deux rameaux auxquels il est suspendu, et il voit à leur naissance deux rats, l'un noir, l'autre blanc, qui ne cessent de les ronger. Un autre objet cependant se présente à sa vue: c'est une ruche remplie de mouches à miel, il se met à manger de leur miel, et le plaisir qu'il y trouve lui fait oublier les serpents sur lesquels reposent ses pieds, les rats qui rongent les rameaux auxquels il est suspendu, et le danger dont il est menacé à chaque instant, de devenir la proie du dragon qui guette le moment de sa chute pour le dévorer. Son étourderie et son illusion ne cessent qu'avec son existence. Ce puits c'est le monde rempli de dangers et de misères; les quatre serpents ce sont les quatre humeurs dont le mélange forme notre corps, mais qui, lorsque leur équilibre est rompu, deviennent autant de poisons mortels; ces deux rats, l'un noir, l'autre blanc, ce sont le jour et la nuit, dont la succession consume la durée de notre vie, le dragon c'est le terme inévitable qui nous attend tous; le miel, enfin, ce sont les plaisirs des sens dont la fausse douceur nous séduit et nous détourne du chemin où nous devons marcher. This is again, with some slight alterations, to be found among the specimens of the great mystical poet of Persia, Descheleddin, given by Von Hammer (*Gesch. d. schön. Redek Pers.* p. 183), in Barlaam and Josaphat, 12, and elsewhere. In S. DE SACY's *Chrest. Arabe* (vol. ii. p. 364) there is a parable by an Arabian author, which bears some resemblance, particularly at its opening, to that of the Talents; and in THOLUCK's *Bluthensammlung aus d. Morgenl. Myst.* there are several from the mystical poets of Persia,—for instance, a beautiful one, p. 105.



## PARABLE I.

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### \* *THE SOWER.*

MATT. xiii 3-8, and 18-23; MARK iv. 4-8, and 14-21;  
LUKE viii. 5-8, and 11-15.

IT is evidently the purpose of St. Matthew to present to his readers the parables recorded in his thirteenth chapter, as the first which the Lord spoke; with the parable of the Sower He commenced a manner of teaching which He had not hitherto employed. This is sufficiently indicated by the question of the disciples, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (ver. 10), with our Lord's answer (ver. 11-17), in which He justifies his use of this method of teaching, and declares his purpose in adopting it; and no less so, when He treats this parable as the fundamental one, on the right understanding of which would depend their comprehension of all which were to follow: "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?" (Mark iv. 13). And as this was the first occasion on which He brought forth these new things out of his treasure (see ver. 22), so was it the occasion on which He brought them forth with the largest hand. We have nowhere else in the Gospels so rich a group of parables assembled together, so many and so costly pearls strung upon a single thread. The seven recorded here divide themselves into two smaller groups—the first four being spoken to the multitude from the ship—the three last, as would seem, on the same day, in the narrower circle of his disciples in the house.

Before proceeding to consider the parables themselves, let us seek to realize to ourselves, and to picture vividly to our minds, what the aspects of that outward nature were with which our blessed Lord and the listening multitudes were surrounded. St. Matthew tells us that "Jesus went out from the house," probably at Capernaum, which was the city where

He commonly dwelt after his open ministry began (Matt. iv. 13), "his own city" (Matt. ix. 1), and which was "close by the sea-shore,"\* and going out He "sat down by the sea-side," that is, by the lake of Genesareth, the scene of so many incidents in his ministry. This lake, called in the Old Testament "the sea of Chinnereth" (Numb. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xiii. 27), and "the water of Gennesar" (1 Macc. xi. 67), and now Bahr Tabaria, goes by many names in the Gospels. It is often called simply "the sea" (Mark iv. 1), or "the sea of Galilee" (Matt. xv. 29; John vi. 1), or "the sea of Tiberias" (John xxi. 1), though indeed it was an inland lake of no very great extent, being but about sixteen miles in length, and no more than six in breadth. But it might well claim regard for its beauty, if not for its extent. The Jewish writers would have it that it was beloved of God above all the waters of Canaan; and indeed, almost all ancient authors that have mentioned it, as well as modern travellers, speak in glowing terms of the beauty and rich fertility of its banks. Hence sometimes its name of Genesareth has been derived, which some explain as "the garden of riches,"† though the derivation is insecure. And even now, when the land is crushed under the rod of Turkish misrule, many traces of its former beauty remain, many evidences of the fertility which its shores will again assume in the day which assuredly cannot be very far off, when that rod shall be lightened from them. It is true that the olive-gardens and vineyards, which once crowned the high and romantic hills with which it is bounded on the east and the west, have disappeared; but the citron, the orange, and the date-tree, are still found there in rich abundance; and in the higher regions, the products of a more temperate zone meet together with these; while, lower down, its banks are still covered with aromatic shrubs, and its waters are still, as of old, sweet and wholesome to drink, and always

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\* *Τὴν παραθαλασσίαν*, probably so called to distinguish it from another Capernaum on the brook Kishon.

† Jerome (*De Nomin. Heb*) makes Gennesar=*hortus principum*.

cool, clear, and transparent to the very bottom, and as gently breaking on the fine white sand with which its shores are strewn as they did of old, when the feet of the Son of God trod those sands, or walked upon those waters.\* On the edge of this beautiful lake the multitude were assembled; the place was convenient; for, "whilst the lake is almost completely surrounded by mountains, those mountains never come down into the water; but always leave a beach of greater or lesser extent along the water's edge."† Their numbers were such, that probably, as on another occasion (Luke v. 1), they pressed upon the Lord, so that He found it convenient to enter into a ship; and putting off a little from the shore, He taught them from it, speaking "many things unto them in parables."

First in order is the parable of the Sower. It rests, like so many others, on one of the common familiar doings of daily life. The Lord lifted up, it may be, his eyes, and saw at no great distance a husbandman scattering his seed in the furrows, and, indeed, the whole scenery of the parable.‡ As

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\* Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* iii. 10, 7) rises into high poetical animation in describing its attractions, and in ROHR'S *Palestina* (termed by Goethe "a glorious book"), p. 67, there is a singularly beautiful description of this lake and the neighbouring country. See also LIGHTFOOT'S *Chorograph Cent.* lxx 79; and MEUSCHEN, *Nov Test ex Talm. illust* p. 151. Yet Robinson (*Bibl. Researches*, vol. iii. p. 253) is far less enthusiastic in his praise. He speaks, indeed, of the lake as a "beautiful sheet of limpid water in a deeply depressed basin;" but the form of the hills, "regular and almost unbroken heights" (p. 312), was to his eye "rounded and tame," and, as it was the middle summer when his visit was made, the verdure of the spring had already disappeared, and he complains of a nakedness in the general aspect of the scenery. But the account which transcends all others in the picturesque accuracy of its details, which leaves nothing to be desired by the reader, except that he might himself behold this, "the most sacred sheet of water which this earth contains," is to be found in STANLEY'S *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 361-378.

† STANLEY, p. 369.

‡ A striking passage from STANLEY shows us how easily this may have been. He is describing the shores of the lake, and says: "A slight recess in the hillside, close upon the plain, disclosed at once, in detail, and with a conjunction which I remember nowhere else in Palestine, every feature of the great parable. There was the undu-

it belongs to the essentially popular nature of the Gospels, that parables should be found in them rather than in the Epistles, where indeed they never appear, so it belongs to the popular character of the parable, that it should thus rest upon the familiar doings of common life, the matters which occupy

"The talk

Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk  
Of the world's business,"

while at the same time the Lord, using these to set forth eternal and spiritual truths, ennobles them, showing, as He does, how they continually reveal and set forth the deepest mysteries of his kingdom. "*A sower went forth to sow*"—what a dignity and significance have these few words, used in the sense in which the Lord here uses them, given in all after-times to the toils of the husbandman in the furrow.

The comparison of the relations between the teacher and the taught to those between the sower and the soil, the truth communicated being the seed sown, is one so deeply grounded in the truest analogies between the worlds of nature and of spirit, that we must not wonder to find it of frequent recurrence, not merely in Scripture (1 Pet. i. 23; 1 John iii. 9), but in the writings of all wiser heathens,\* who have realized

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lating corn-field descending to the water's edge. There was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here and there on either side of it, or upon it,—itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human feet. There was the 'good' rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills elsewhere, descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hillside protruding here and there through the corn-fields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn—the *nabk*, that kind of which tradition says that the crown of thorns was woven—springing up, like the fruit-trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat."

\* Grotius is here rich in parallel passages from Greek and Latin writers; he or others have adduced such from Aristotle, Cicero (*Tusc.* ii. 5), Plutarch, Quintilian, Philo, and many more; but it would not be worth while merely to repeat their quotations. I do not observe this one from Seneca (*Ep.* 73): *Deus ad homines venit, imo (quod propius est) in homines venit. Semina in corporibus humanis dispersa sunt,*

at all what teaching means, and what sort of influence the spirit of one man may exercise on the spirits of his fellows. While all teaching that is worthy the name is such, while all words, even of men, that are better than mere words, are as seeds, able to take root in their minds and hearts that hear them, contain germs in them that only by degrees develop themselves;\* in how eminent a sense must this be true of the words, or rather of the word, of God, which *He* spake, who was himself the seminal Word which He communicated.† Best right of all to the title of seed has that word, which exercises not merely a partial working on the hearts in which it is received, but wholly transforms and renews them—that word of living and expanding truth by which men are born anew into the kingdom of God, and which in its effects “endureth for ever” (1 Pet. i. 23, 25). I cannot doubt that the Lord intended to set himself forth as the chief sower of the seed (not, of course, to the exclusion of the Apostles‡ and their successors), that here, as well as in the next parable, “he that soweth the good seed” is the Son of man; and this, even though He nowhere, in as many words, announces himself as such.§ Indeed, it is difficult to see how we can stop short of Him, when we are seeking to give the full meaning to the

quæ si bonus cultor excipit, similia origini prodeunt, et paria his ex quibus orta sunt surgunt si malus, non aliter quam humus sterilis ac palustris necat, ac deinde creat purgamenta pro frugibus.

\* Thus Shakspeare, of a man of thoughtful wisdom :

“ His plausible words  
He scattered not in ears, but grafted them  
To grow there and to bear ”

† Salmeron very beautifully (*Serm. in Par. Evang.* p. 30) : Quemadmodum Christus Medicus est et medicina, Sacerdos et hostia, Redemptor et redeemptio, Legislator et lex, Janitor et ostium, ita Sator et semen. Nec enim est aliud Evangelium ipsum, quam Christus incarnatus, natus, prædicans, moriens, resurgens, mittens Spiritum Sanctum, congregans Ecclesiam, illamque sanctificans et gubernans

‡ Isidore of Pelusium (*Ep.* 176, p. 326) has a sublime comparison, in which he likens St. Paul to Triptolemus, the winged scatterer of seed through the earth.

§ See, however, Greswell's arguments to the contrary (*Exp. of the Par.* vol. v. part 2, p. 238).

words, "*A sower went forth to sow.*"\* His entrance into the world was a going forth to sow; the word of the kingdom, which word He first proclaimed, was his seed; the hearts of men his soil; others were only able to sow, because He had sown first; they did but carry on the work which He had auspicated and begun.

"*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side [and it was trodden down (Luke viii. 5)], and the fowls came and devoured them up.*" Some, that is, fell on the hard footpath, or road, where the glebe was not broken, and so it could not sink down in the earth, but lay exposed on the surface to the feet of passers-by, till at length it became an easy prey to the birds, such as in the East are described as following in large flocks the husbandman, to gather up, if they can, the seed-corn which he has scattered. Of the parable before us we have an authentic interpretation from the Lord's own lips; and these words He thus explains: "*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.*" In St. Luke, Satan appears yet more distinctly as the adversary and hinderer of the kingdom of God (of whom as such there will be fitter opportunity of speaking in the following parable), the reason why he snatches the word away being added—"lest they should believe and be saved." The words which St. Matthew alone records, "*and understandeth it not,*" are very important for the comprehending what this first state of mind and heart is, in which the word of God is unproductive of any, even a transitory, effect. The man "*understandeth it not;*" he does not recognize himself as standing in any relation to the word which he hears, or to the kingdom of grace which that word proclaims. All that speaks of man's connexion with a higher invisible world, all that speaks of sin, of redemption, of holiness, is unintelligible to him, and without significance. But how has he arrived at

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\* Salmeron (*Serm. in Parab.* p. 29). Dicitur exire per operationem Incarnationis, quâ indutus processit tanquam agricola aptam pluviæ, soli, et frigori vestem assumens, cum tamen Rex esset.

this state? He has brought himself to it; he has exposed his heart as a common road to every evil influence of the world, till it has become hard as a pavement,\* till he has laid waste the very soil in which the word of God should have taken root; he has not submitted it to the ploughshare of the law, which would have broken it up; which, if he had suffered it to do its appointed work, would have gone before, preparing that soil to receive the seed of the Gospel. But what renders his case the more hopeless, and takes away even a possibility of the word germinating there, is, that besides the evil condition of the soil, there is also *one* watching to take advantage of that evil condition, to use every weapon that man puts into his hands, against man's salvation; and he, lest by possibility such a hearer "*should believe and be saved,*" sends his ministers in the shape of evil thoughts, worldly desires, carnal lusts; and by their help, as St. Mark records it, "*immediately taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*" "*This is he that received seed by the way side.*"

There was other seed, which appeared at the first to have, but in the end had not truly any, better success. For we read, "*Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up,† they were scorched; and because they had no root they withered away.*" The "*stony places*" here are to be explained by the "*rock*" of St. Luke, and it is important, for the right understanding of the parable, that the words in St. Matthew, or rather in our

\* H de Sto. Victore (*Annot. in Matt.*): Via est cor frequenti malarum cogitationum transitu attritum et arefactum. Corn. a Lap.: Via est trita secularis et licentioris vitæ consuetudo.

† Ἀνατέλλειν once occurs transitively in the N. T., Matt. v. 45; so Gen. i. 18, Isai. xlv. 8 (lxx.). It is especially used, as in this passage, of the rising of the sun or stars, Num. xxiv. 17; Isai. lx. 1; Mal. iv. 2: but also of the springing up of plants from the earth, Gen. xix. 25; Isai. xlv. 4; Ezek. xvii. 6, Ps. xci. 7; and so ἐξανέτειλε in this present parable. In either sense the title Ἀναρολή belongs to Christ, and has been applied to Him in both; as He is The Branch (Ἀναρολή, Zech. vi. 12, lxx.), and as He is The Day-spring (Luke i. 78).

translation (for "*rocky places*,"—as, indeed, the Rhemish version has it,—would have made all clear) do not lead us astray. A soil mingled with stones is not meant; for these, however numerous or large, would not certainly hinder the roots from striking deeply downward; for those roots, with an instinct of their own, would feel and find their way, penetrating between the interstices of the stones, till they reached the moisture below. But what is intended is ground, where a thin superficial coating of mould covered the surface of a rock, which stretched below it, presenting a barrier beyond which it was wholly impossible that the roots could penetrate, to draw up supplies of nourishment from beneath.\* While the seed had not fallen into deep earth, therefore the plant the sooner appeared above the surface; and while the rock below hindered it from striking deeply downward, it put forth its energies the more luxuriantly in the stalk. It sprang up without delay, but was not rooted in that deep moist soil which would have enabled it to resist the scorching heat of the sun, and being smitten by that, withered and died.†

Concerning the signification of this division of the parable we learn, "*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*" Though the issue is the same in this case as in the last, the promise is very different; so far from the heart of this class of hearers appearing irreceptive of the truth, the good news of the kingdom is received at once, and with gladness.‡ But alas! the joy thus suddenly conceived is not, as the sequel too surely proves, a joy springing up from the contemplation of the greatness of the benefit, even after all the counterbalancing costs, and hazards, and sacrifices, are taken into account, but

\* Bengel: Non innuuntur lapides sparsim in agro jacentes, sed petra sive saxum continuum, sub terræ superficie tenui.

† How exactly this is taken from the life, a brief quotation from Pliny (*H. N.* xvii. 8) will show: In Syriâ levem tenui suleo imprimunt vomerem, quia subest saxum exurens æstate semina.

‡ Cocceus: Statim lætari est malum signum, quia non potest non



a joy arising from an overlooking and leaving out of calculation those costs and hazards. It is this circumstance which fatally differences the joy of this class of hearers from that of the finder of the treasure (Matt. xiii. 44), who "for joy thereof" went and *sold all that he had*, that he might purchase the field which contained the treasure—that is, was willing to deny himself all things, and to suffer all things, that he might win Christ. We have rather here a state of mind not stubbornly repelling the truth, but woefully lacking in all deeper earnestness, such as that of the great multitudes that went with Jesus, not considering what his discipleship involved,—those multitudes to whom He turned and told at length, and in the strongest language, what the conditions of that discipleship were (Luke xiv. 25-33), exhorting them beforehand that they should count the cost. This is exactly what the hearer here described has not done; whatever was fair and beautiful in Christianity as it first presents itself, had attracted him—its sweet and comfortable promises,\* the moral loveliness of its doctrines; but not its answer to the deepest needs of the human heart; as neither, when he received the word with gladness, had he contemplated the having to endure hardness in his warfare with sin and Satan and the world.—"*Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word; by and by he is offended.*"† It is not here, as in the last case, that Satan needs merely to come and take the

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verbum Dei, si recte percipiatur, in homine operari displicentiam sui, ἀγανάκτιον, angustias, cor contritum, spiritum fractum, famem ac sitim, denique luctum, ut Servator docuit, Matt. v.

\* Bede: Illa sunt præcordia quæ dulcedine tantum auditi sermonis ac promissis cælestibus ad horam delectantur.

† Quintilian (*Inst.* i. 3 3-5) supplies a good parallel; although he, it is true, is speaking of the rapid progress and rapid decay in the region of the intellectual, our Lord in that of the moral, life: Illud ingeniorum velut præcox genus non temere unquam pervenit ad frugem. . . . Non multum præstant, sed cito. Non subest vera vis, nec penitus immissis radicibus nititur; ut quæ summo solo sparsa sunt semina celerius se effundunt; et imitatæ spicas herbulæ, inanibus aristis ante messem flavescent.

word out of the heart without further trouble; that word has found some place there, and it needs that he bring some hostile influences to bear against it. What he brings in the present case are outward or inward trials, these being compared to the burning heat of the sun.\* It is true that generally the light and warmth of the sun are used to set forth the genial and comfortable workings of God's grace; as eminently, *Mål.* iv. 2; but not always, for see, beside the passage before us, *Ps.* cxxi. 6; *Isai.* xlix. 10; *Rev.* vii. 16. As that heat, had the plant been rooted deeply enough, would have furthered its growth, and hastened its ripening, fitting it for the sickle and the barn—so these tribulations would have furthered the growth in grace of the true Christian, and ripened him for heaven. But as the heat scorches the blade which has no deepness of earth, and has sprung up on a shallow ground, so the troubles and afflictions which would have strengthened a true faith, cause a faith which was merely temporary to fail.† When these afflictions for the word's sake arrive, he is offended, as though some strange thing had happened to him: for then are the times of sifting,‡ and of winnowing; and then, too, every one that has no root, or as St. Matthew describes it, “no root in himself,” no inward root,§ falls away.

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\* It was with the rising of the sun that the *καύσων*, the hot desert wind, began commonly to blow, the deadly effects of which on all vegetation are often alluded to (*Jon.* iv. 8, *Jan.* i 11) Plants thus smitten with the heat are called *torrefacta*, *ηλιούμενα*

† Augustine is particularly rich in striking sayings on the different effects which tribulations will have on those that are rooted and grounded in the faith, and those that are otherwise. Thus (*Enarr. in Ps.* 21), speaking of the furnace of affliction: *Ibi est aurum, ibi est palea, ibi ignis in angusto operatur. Ignis ille non est diversus, et diversa agit, paleam in cinerem vertit, auro sordes tollit.* See for the same image *Chrysostom, Ad Pop. Antioch Hom.* iv. 1.

‡ The very word “tribulation,” with which we have rendered the *θλίψις* of the original, rests upon this image—tribulatio from *tribulum*, the threshing-roller, and thus used to signify those afflictive processes by which in the moral discipline of men God separates their good from their evil, their wheat from their chaff.

§ It is with allusion to this passage, no doubt, that men of faith are called in the Greek Fathers *βαθυρρίζοι, πολυρρίζοι*. Compare with this division of the parable the *Shepherd* of Hermas, iii. sim. 9. 21.

The having of that inward root here answers to having a foundation on the rock, to having oil in the vessels, elsewhere (Matt. vii. 25 ; xxv. 4). And the image itself is not an unfrequent one in Scripture (Ephes. iii. 17 ; Col. ii. 7 ; Jer. xvii. 8 ; Hos. ix. 16). It has a peculiar fitness and beauty, for as the roots of a tree are out of sight, yet from them it derives its firmness and stability, so upon the hidden life of the Christian, that life which is out of the sight of other men, his firmness and stability depend ; and as it is through the hidden roots that the nourishment is drawn up to the stem and branches, and the leaf continues green, and the tree does not cease from bearing fruit, even so in the Christian's hidden life, that life which "is hid with Christ in God," lie the sources of his strength and of his spiritual prosperity. Such a "*root in himself*" had Peter, who, when many were offended and drew back, exclaimed, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68). This faith that Christ and no other had the words of eternal life and blessedness, was what constituted his root, causing him to stand firm when so many fell away. So, again, when the Hebrew Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had "in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb. x. 34), this knowledge, this faith concerning their unseen inheritance, was the root which enabled them joyfully to take that loss, and not to draw back unto perdition, as so many had done. Compare 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, where again the faith in the unseen eternal things is the root, which, as St. Paul declares, enables him to count the present affliction light, and to endure to the end. Demas, on the other hand, lacked that root. It might at first sight seem as if he would be more correctly ranged under the third class of hearers ; since he forsook Paul, "having loved this present world." But when we examine more closely what was Paul's condition at Rome at the moment when Demas left him, we find it to have been one of great outward trial and danger ; so that it would seem more probable that the immediate cause of his going back, was the tribulation which came for the word's sake.\*

\* See Bernard (*De Offic. Episc.* iv. 14, 15), for an interesting dis-

But thirdly—of the seed which the sower cast, “*some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up and choked them,*” or as Wiclif has, “strangled it,”\* so that, as St. Mark adds, “*it yielded no fruit.*” It is not so much that this seed fell among thorns that were full grown, as in ground where the roots of these had not been carefully extirpated, in ground which had not been thoroughly purged and cleansed; otherwise it could not be said, in the words of Luke, “*that the thorns sprang up with it.*” They grew together; only the thorns overtopped the good seed, shut them out from the air and light, drew away from their roots the moisture and richness of earth which should have nourished them, and thus they pined and dwindled in the shade; they grew dwarfed and stunted, for the best of the soil did not feed them—forming, indeed, a blade, but unable to form a full corn in the ear, to bring any fruit to perfection. It is not here, as in the first case, that there was no soil, or none deserving the name; nor yet, as in the second case, that there was a poor or shallow soil. Here there was no lack of soil—it might be good soil; but what lacked was a careful husbandry, a diligent eradication of the mischievous growths, which, unless extirpated, would oppress and strangle whatever sprang up side by side with them.

Of this part of the parable we have the following explanation: “*He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care† of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches [and the lusts of other things ‡ entering in (Mark iv. 19)], choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful,*” or as St. Luke gives it, “*they bring no fruit to perfection.*”§ It

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cussion, whether the faith of those comprehended under this second head was, so long as it lasted, real or not,—in fact, on the question whether it be possible to fall from grace given.

\* Columella: *Angentem herbam*. The image of an evil growth strangling a nobler, is permanently embodied in our language in the name *cockle*, given to a weed well known in our fields—derived from the Anglo-Saxon *ceocan*, to choke.

† Catullus: *Spinosa Erycina serens in pectore curas*.

‡ Αἱ περὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἐπιθυμίαι. Winer (*Gramm.* p. 177) would rather translate, “The lusts *about* other things” (*cupiditates quæ circa reliqua versantur*).

§ Οὐ τέλεσφοροῦσι. The word occurs only here in the N. T. It is

is not here, as in the first case, that the word of God is totally ineffectual; nor yet, as in the second case, that after a temporary obedience to the truth, there is an evident falling away from it, such as the withering of the stalk indicates: the profession of a spiritual life is retained, the "name to live" still remains; but the life and power of godliness is by degrees eaten out and has departed. And to what disastrous influences are these sad effects attributed? To two things, the cares of this world and its pleasures; these are the thorns and briers that strangle the life of the soul.\* It may seem strange at first sight that these which appear so opposite to one another, should yet be linked together, and have the same evil consequences attributed to them; but the Lord does, in fact, here present to us this earthly life on its two sides, under its two aspects. There is, first, its crushing oppressive side, the poor man's toil how to live at all, to keep hunger and nakedness from the door, the struggle for a daily subsistence, "*the cares† of this life*," which, if not met in faith, hinder the thriving of the spiritual word in the heart. But life has its flattering as well as its threatening side, its pleasures as well as its cares; and as those who have heard and received the word of the kingdom with gladness are still exposed to be crushed by the cares of life, so, on the other hand, to be deceived by its flatteries and its allurements. Because they have thus received

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especially used of a woman bringing her child to the birth, or a tree its fruit to maturity (Josephus, *Antt* i. 6 §).

\* See the *Shepherd* of Hermas, iii. sim. 9. 20, for the emblem of the mountain covered with thorns and briers; and so Jer. iv 3: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." It is evident that in the great symbolic language of the outward world, these have a peculiar fitness for the expression of influences hostile to the truth. They are themselves the consequences and evidences of sin, of a curse which has passed on from man to the earth which he inhabits (Gen. iii. 17), till that earth had none other but a *thorn-crown* to yield to its Lord. It is a sign of the deep fitness of this image that others have been led to select it for the setting forth of the same truth. Thus the Pythagorean Lysis (BAUR's *Apollonius*, p. 192): Πυκινὰ καὶ λάσαι λόχμαι περὶ τὰς φρενὰς καὶ τὰν καρδίαν πεφύκαντι τῶν μὴ καθαρῶς τοῖς μαθήμασιν ὀργισθέντων, πᾶν τὸ ἄμερον καὶ πρᾶον καὶ λόγιστικὸν τᾶς ψυχᾶς ἐπισκιάζουσαι, καὶ κωλύουσai προφανῶς μὲν ἀνέζηῆμεν καὶ προκύψαι τὸ νοητικόν.

† *Μέριμνα* from *μέρις*, that which draws the heart different ways.

it, it does not therefore follow that the world has altogether lost on them its power, or that the old man is dead. For a while it may seem dead, so long as the first joy on account of the treasure found endures; but unless mortified in earnest, will presently revive in all its strength anew. Unless the soil of the heart be diligently watched, the thorns and briars, of which it seemed a thorough clearance had been made, will again grow up apace, and choke the good seed.\* While that which God promises is felt to be good, but also what the world promises is felt to be good also, and a good of the same kind, instead of a good merely and altogether subordinate to the other, there will be an attempt made to combine the service of the two, to serve God and mammon; but the attempt will be in vain: they who make it will bring no fruit to perfection, will fail to bring forth those perfect fruits of the Spirit which it was the purpose of the word of God to produce in them.†

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See Hos. x 2 "Their heart is divided," i. e. between God and the world, such a heart constitutes the *ἀνὴρ διψυχος* (Jam. i. 8). See Passow, s. v. *μέμνηνα*, who quotes Terence. *Curae animum divorce trahunt*

\* Thus with a deep heart-knowledge Thauler (*Dom. xxii. post Trin. Serm. 2*). *Nostis ipsi, quod dum ager sive hortus a lolis ac zizaniis expurgatus, ut plurimum radices quædam zizaniorum in terræ visceribus mancant, ita tamen ut minime deprehendantur. Interim humus diligenter conseritur atque sarritur: ubi dum bona semina oriri deberent, simul zizania ex radicibus terræ fixis succrescunt, et frumentum aliasque herbas et semina bona destruunt opprimuntque. Sic ergo et in præsentī loco radices dico, pravos quosque defectus et vitia in fundo latentia, et necdum mortificata: quæ per confessionem et pœnitentiam, ut ita dicam, sarrita quidem sunt, et per bona exercitia exarata: attamen vitiosarum radicum malæ inclinationes seu propensiones, puta vel superbæ vel luxuriæ, iræ vel invidiæ, seu odii huiusque similium in ipso fundo relictæ sunt, quæ postea exoriuntur, et ubi divina, beata, virtuosa, laudabilis vita ex homine germinare, succrescere, oriri deberet, hæc pessima noxiarum radicum germina prodeunt, fructusque illius ac religiosam devotamque dispergunt, extinguunt, obruunt vitam.*

† Ovid's description (*Metamorph. v. 463 466*) of the things which hinder the returns of a harvest exactly includes, with a few slight additions, those which our Lord has given; though the order is a little different:

*Et modo sol nimius, nimius modo corripit imber;  
Sideraque ventique nocent; avidæque volucres  
Semina jacta legunt; lolium tribulique fatigant  
Triticeas messes, et inexpugnabile gramen.*

But it is not all the seed which thus sooner or later perishes. The spiritual husbandman is to sow in hope, knowing that with the blessing of the Lord he will not always sow in vain, that a part will prosper.\* "*Other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*" St. Luke says simply, "*and bare fruit a hundredfold,*" leaving out the two lesser proportions of return; which St. Mark gives, but reverses the order of the three, beginning from the lowest return, and ascending to the highest. The return of a hundred for one is not unheard of in the East, though always mentioned as something extraordinary; thus it is said of Isaac, that he sowed, "and received in the same year a hundredfold, and the Lord blessed him" (Gen. xxvi. 12); and other examples of the same kind are not wanting.†

We learn that "*he that receiveth seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty,*" or with the important variation of St. Luke, "*that on the good ground are they, who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*"—important, because in it comes distinctly forward a difficulty, which equally existed in the parable as recorded by the other Evangelists, but did not come forward with an equal distinctness, and yet on the right solution of which a successful interpretation must altogether depend. What is this "*honest and good heart*"? How

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\* Thus the author of a sermon in the Appendix to Augustine (*Opp.* vol vi. p. 597, Bengt ed): Non ergo nos, dilectissimi, aut timor spinarum, aut saxa petrarum, aut durissima via perterreat. dum tamen seminantes verbum Dei ad terram bonam tandem aliquando pervenire possimus. Accipe verbum Dei, omnis ager, omnis homo, sive sterilis, sive fecundus. Ego spargam, tu vide quomodo accipias: ego erogem, tu vide quales fructus reddas.

† Herodotus mentions that two hundredfold was a common return in the plain of Babylon, and sometimes three; and Niebuhr (*Beschreib. v. Arab.* p. 153) mentions a species of maize that returns four hundredfold: Wetstein (in loc) has collected many examples from antiquity of returns as great as, or far greater than, that mentioned in the text.

can any heart be called "*good*," before the Word and the Spirit have made it so?—and yet here the seed *finds* a good soil, does not *make* it. The same question recurs, when the Lord says, "He that is of God heareth God's words" (John viii. 41); and again, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John xviii. 37). But who in this sinful world can be called "of the truth," for is it not the universal doctrine of Scripture that men become "of the truth" through hearing Christ's words, not that they hear his words because they are of the truth; that the heart is good, through receiving the word, not that it receives the word, because it is good?\* This is certainly the scriptural doctrine, and he teaches *preposterously*, to use the word in its strictest sense, who teaches any thing else; but at the same time those passages in St. John, as well as this present parable, and much more also in the Scripture, bear witness to the fact that there are conditions of heart which yield readier entrance to the truth than others. "Being of the truth,"—"doing the truth,"—having the soil of "*an honest and good heart*,"—all signifying the same thing. Inasmuch as they are anterior to hearing God's words—coming to the light—bringing forth fruit—they cannot signify a state of mind and heart in which the truth is positive and realized, but they indicate one in which there is a preparedness to receive the truth. None is good save God only; and yet the Scripture speaks often of *good* men: even thus no heart can be said to be absolutely a good soil; yet comparatively it may be affirmed of some, that their hearts are a soil fitter for receiving the seed of everlasting life than those of others. Thus the "son of peace" will alone receive the message of peace (Luke x. 6; cf. Acts xiii. 48), while yet nothing but the reception of that message will make him truly and in

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\* Augustine (*In Ev. Joh. Tract.* 12) puts the difficulty, and solves it in this manner. Quid est *hæc*? quorum enim erant bona opera? Nonne venisti ut iustifices impios?—He replies: Initium operum bonorum confessio est operum malorum. Facis veritatem, et venis ad lucem. Quid est, facis veritatem? non te palpas, non tibi blandiris, non tibi adularis, non dicis, Justus sum, cum sis iniquus, et incipis facere veritatem.



the highest sense a "son of peace." He was before, indeed, a *latent* son of peace, but it is the Gospel which first makes actual that which hitherto was only potential. So that the preaching of the Gospel may be likened to the scattering of sparks, which, where they find tinder, fasten there, and kindle into a flame; or the truth is as a loadstone thrust in among the world's rubbish, attracting to itself all particles of true metal, which but for it *would* never, as they *could* never, have extricated themselves from the surrounding mass, however they testify their affinity to the loadstone, now that it is brought in contact with them.

Exactly thus among those to whom the word of Christ came, there were two divisions of men, and the same will always subsist in the world. There were, first, the false-hearted, who called evil good and good evil, who loved their darkness, and hated the light that would make that darkness manifest, who, when that light of the Lord shone round about them, only drew further back into their own darkness, self-excusers and self-justifiers, such as were for the most part the Scribes and the Pharisees with whom He came in contact. But there were also others, sinners as well, often, as regards actual transgression of positive law, much greater sinners than those first, but who yet acknowledged their evil—had no wish to alter the everlasting relations between right and wrong—who, when the light appeared, did not refuse to be drawn to it, even though they knew that it would condemn their darkness, that it would require an entire renewing of their hearts and remodelling of their lives: such were the Matthews and the Zacchæuses, and all who confessed their deeds, justifying not themselves, but God (Luke vii. 29, 30). Not that I would prefer to instance these as examples of the "*good and honest heart*," except in so far as it is needful to guard against a Pelagian abuse of the phrase, and to show how the Lord's language here does not condemn even great and grievous sinners to an incapacity for receiving the word of life. Nathanael would be a yet more perfect specimen of the class alluded to—the "Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile," in other words,

the man with the soil of an honest and good heart, fitted for receiving and nourishing the word of everlasting life, and for bringing forth fruit with patience; one of a simple, truthful, and earnest nature; who had been faithful to the light which he had, diligent in the performance of the duties which he knew, who had not been resisting God's preparation in him for imparting to him at the last his best gift, even the knowledge of his Son. For we must keep ever in mind that the good soil comes as much from God as the seed which is to find there its home. The law and the preaching of repentance, God's secret and preventing grace, run before the preaching of the word of the kingdom; and thus when that word comes, it finds men with a less or a greater readiness to receive it for what indeed it is, a word of eternal life.

When the different measures of prosperity are given, the seed bringing forth "*some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold,*" it seems difficult to determine whether these indicate different degrees of fidelity in those that receive the truth, according to which they bring forth fruit unto God more or less abundantly; or rather different spheres of action more or less wide, which they are appointed to occupy;—as in another parable to one servant were given five talents, to another two; in which instance the diligence and fidelity appear to have been equal, and the meed of praise the same since each gained in proportion to the talents committed to him, though these talents were many more in one case than in the other: I should suppose, however, the former.\* The words which St. Luke records (ver. 18), "*Take heed therefore how ye hear, for whosoever hath to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have*" (cf. Mark iv. 33), are very important for the

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\* So Irenæus (*Con. Hær.* v. 39, 2) must have understood it, and Cyprian (*Ep.* 69): *Eadem gratia spiritalis quæ æqualiter in baptismo a credentibus sumitur, in conversatione atque actu nostro postmodum vel minuitur vel augetur, ut in Evangelio Dominicum semen æqualiter seminatur, sed pro varietate terræ aliud absumitur, aliud in multiformem copiam vel tricesimi, vel sexagesimi, vel centesimi numeri fructu exuberante cumulatur.*

avoiding of a misunderstanding, which else might easily have arisen here. The disciples might have been in danger of supposing that these four conditions of heart, in which the word found its hearers, were permanent, immutable, and definitively fixed; and therefore that in one heart the word must flourish, in another that it could never germinate at all, in others that it could only prosper for a little while. There is no such immoral fatalism in Scripture; and the warning, "*Take heed how ye hear,*" testifies against it, for it tells us that, according as the word is heard and received, will its success be—that, while it is indeed true that all which has gone before in a man's life will greatly influence the manner of his reception of that word, for every event will have tended either to the improving or the deteriorating of the soil of his heart, and will therefore render it more or less probable that the seed of God's word will prosper there, yet it lies on him now to take heed how he hears, and through this taking heed to insure, with God's blessing, that it shall bring forth fruit that shall remain (Jam. i. 21).

For while this is true, and the thought is a very awful one, that there is such a thing as laying waste the very soil in which the seed of eternal life should have taken root—that every act of sin, of unfaithfulness to the light within us, is, as it were, a treading of the ground into more hardness, so that the seed shall not sink in it,—or a wasting of the soil, so that the seed shall find no nutriment there,—or a fitting of it to a kindlier nourishing of thorns and briars than of good seed;—yet on the other hand, even for those who have brought themselves into these evil conditions, a recovery is still, through the grace of God, possible: the hard soil may again become soft,—the shallow soil may become rich and deep,—and the soil beset with thorns open and clear.\* For the heavenly seed

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\* So Augustine (*Serm. lxxiii* 3): Mutamini cum potestis; dura aratro versate, de agro lapides projicite, de agro spinas evellite. Nolite habere durum cor, unde cito verbum Dei pereat. Nolite habere tenuem terram, ubi radix caritatis alta non s' deat. Nolite curis et cupiditatibus secularibus offocare bonum semen, quod vobis spargitur laboribus

in this differs from the earthly, that the latter, as it finds, so it must use its soil, for it cannot alter its nature. But the heavenly seed, if acted upon by the soil where it is cast, also reacts more mightily upon it, softening it where it was hard (Jer. xxiii. 29), deepening it where it was shallow, cutting up and extirpating the roots of evil where it was encumbered with these; and, wherever it is allowed free course, transforming and ennobling each of these inferior soils, till it has become that which man's heart was at first, good ground, fit to afford nourishment to that Divine Word, that seed of eternal life.\*

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nostis. Etenim Dominus seminat; sed nos operarii ejus sumus. Sed estote terra bona. Cf. *Serm.* ci. 3; and the author of a sermon, *August. Opp.* vol. vi p. 597, Bened. ed: Si vero te terram infœcundam aut spinosam vel siccam sentis, recurre ad Creatorem tuum. Hoc enim nunc agitur, ut innoveris, ut fœcunderis, ut mgeris ab illo qui posuit desertum in stagna aquarum, et terram sine aquâ in exitus aquarum (Ps cvi. 35-37).

\* As our Saviour here, so the Jewish doctors divide the hearers of the words of wisdom into four classes. The best they liken to a sponge which drinks in all that it receives, and again expresses it for others; the worst to a strainer which allows all the good wine to pass through, and retains only whatever of dregs is worthless and of no account; or to a sieve that lets through the fine flour, and retains only the bran.—Prudentius (*Con. Symm.* ii. v. 1022) has put this parable well into verse. These are a few lines:

Christus . . . dedit hæc præcepta colonis .  
 Semina cum sulcis committitis, arva cavete  
 Dura lapillorum macie, ne decidat illuc  
 Quod seritur: primo quoniam præfertile germen  
 Læxuriat succo mox deficiente, sub æstu  
 Sidens igniferi sitiens torretur et are.  
 Neve in spinosos incurrant semina vepres:  
 Aspera nam segetem surgentem vincula texunt,  
 Ac fragiles calamos nodis rubus aretat acutis.  
 Et ne jacta viæ spargantur in aggere grana:  
 Hæc avibus quia nuda patent, passimque vorantur,  
 Immundisque jacent fœda ad ludibria corvis . . .  
 Talis nostrorum solertia centuplicatos  
 Agrorum redigit fructus.

## PARABLE II.

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### THE TARES.

MATTHEW xiii. 24-30, and 36-43.

“**A** *NOTHER* parable put he forth\* unto them.” Of this parable also, that “*of the tares of the field*,” we have an authentic interpretation from the lips of our Lord himself. And this is well: for it is one, as all students of Church history are aware, on the interpretation of which very much has turned before now. Allusions to it occur at every turn of the controversy which the Church had to maintain with the Donatists; and its whole exposition will need to be carried on with reference to disputes which, though seemingly gone by, yet are not in fact out of date, since in one shape or another they continually reappear in the progress of the Church’s development, and in every heart of man. To these disputes we shall presently arrive.—“*The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field.*” From our Lord’s own lips we learn, “*He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man.*” This is the most frequent title by which our Lord designates himself, though it is never given Him by any other, except in a single instance (Acts vii. 56), and then it would seem only to indicate that the glorified Saviour appeared bodily to the eyes of Stephen. It has been said that He assumed this name, as the one by which the hoped-for Messiah was already commonly known among the Jews. But, so far from this, the name was evidently a strange one to those who, when they heard it, asked, “Who is this Son of man?”

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\* Παρέθηκεν. The word implies that He set it before them as one would set forth or propose a riddle, and is used because the parable has always something of the spiritual enigma, and as such is to call into exercise the spiritual sense of those to whom it is proposed, that they may discover its solution. Cf. Mark iv. 34, ἐπέλυε, he solved them.

(John xii. 34). Not "Son of man," but "Son of David," was the popular name for the expected Messiah (Matt. ix. 27; xii. 23; xv. 22; xx. 31, &c.). Others in the early Church and among the Reformers have understood Him to claim by this title participation in the human nature. No doubt He claimed this; but He claimed much more; He took this name (a name already given Him in the Old Testament, Dan. viii. 13), as He who alone realized the idea of man,\*—as the second Adam, who, unlike the first, should maintain his position as the head and representative of the race,—as the one true and perfect flower which had ever unfolded itself out of the root and stalk of humanity. And asserting this title to himself, He witnessed against those opposite poles of error concerning his person—the Ebionite, to which the exclusive use of the title "Son of David" might have led, and the Gnostic, which denied the reality of the human nature which He bore.

"*The good seed are the children of the kingdom.*" Does it not seem as if there were a slight disagreement between this parable and the preceding, where "the seed" was "the word of God"? Yes; but none in reality; only a progress from that parable to this. In that, the word of God is the instrument by which men are born anew and become children of the kingdom (Jam. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23); that word is considered there more absolutely in and by itself: while here it is considered after it has been received into the heart, incorporated with the man; having brought him into the position of a child of the kingdom, and now so vitally united with him, that the two cannot any more be contemplated asunder (cf. Jer. xxxi. 27; Hos. ii. 23; Zech. x. 9).

The next words, "*The field is the world,*" at once bring us into the heart of the Donatist controversy. Words few and slight as they may seem, a great battle has been fought over them, greater, perhaps, than over any single phrase in the Scripture, if we except the consecrating words at the Holy

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\* So Philo calls the Logos *ὁ ἀληθινὸς ἄνθρωπος*.

Eucharist. It is well known that, apart from the merely personal question concerning the irregularity of certain ordinations, the grounds on which the Donatists justified their separation from the Church Catholic were these: The idea of the Church, they said, is that of a perfectly holy body; holiness is not merely one of its essential predicates, but *the* essential, to which all others must be subordinated, the exclusive note of the Church. They did not deny that hypocrites might possibly lie concealed in its bosom; but where the *evidently* ungodly were suffered to remain in communion with it, not separated off by the exercise of discipline, there it forfeited the character of the true Church, and the faithful were to come out from it; since, if they remained, they would, by the very presence of the others, themselves be defiled. In support of this view, they maintain that such passages as Isai. lii. 1, and as many as spoke of the Church's future freedom from all evil, were meant to apply to it in its present condition; and consequently, where they did not apply, *there* could not be the Church.

Here, as on so many other points, the Church owes to Augustine, not the forming of her doctrine, for that she can owe to no man, but the bringing out into her own clear consciousness that which hitherto she had implicitly possessed, yet had not worked out into a perfect distinctness even for herself. He replied, not in any way gainsaying the truth which the Donatists proclaimed, that holiness must be an essential predicate of the Church, but only refusing to accept their definition of that holiness; and showing that in the Church which they had forsaken, this quality was to be found, and combined with other as essential qualities—catholicity, for instance, to which *they* could make no claim. The Church Catholic, he replied, despite all appearances to the contrary, *is* a holy body, for they only are its members who are in true and living fellowship with Christ, and therefore partakers of his sanctifying Spirit. All others, however they may have the outward notes of belonging to it, are *in* it, but not *of* it: they *press* upon Christ, as that thronging multitude of whom

we read ; they do not *touch* Him, as that believing woman on whom alone his virtue went forth (Luke viii. 45). There are certain outward conditions without which one cannot pertain to his Church, but with which one does not necessarily do so. And they who are thus in it, but not of it, whether hypocrites lying hid, or open offenders who from their numbers may not without greater evils ensuing be expelled,\* do not defile the true members, so long as these share not in their spirit, nor communicate with their evil deeds. They are like the unclean animals in the same ark as the clean (Gen. vii. 2), goats in the same pastures with the sheep (Matt. xxv. 32), chaff on the same barn-floor as the grain (Matt. iii. 12), tares growing in the same field with the wheat, vessels to dishonour in the same great house with the vessels to honour (2 Tim. ii. 20), endured for a while, but in the end to be separated from it, and for ever.

The Donatists wished to make the Church, in its visible form and historic manifestation, identical and coextensive with the true Church which the Lord knoweth and not man. Augustine also affirmed the *identity* of the Church now existing with the final and glorious Church ; but he denied that the two were coextensive. For now the Church is clogged with certain accretions, which shall hereafter be shown *not* to belong, and never to have belonged, to it. He did not affirm,

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\* Augustine's view of the extent to which discipline should be enforced, and the questions of prudence which should determine its enforcing, may be judged from the following passage. Having referred to these parables, and to the separation of the sheep and-goats (Matt xxv.), he proceeds (*Ad Don. post Coll.* 5): Quibus parabolis et figuris Ecclesia prænunciata est usque ad finem sæculi bonos et malos simul habitura, ita ut mali bonis obesse non possint, cum vel ignorantur, vel pro pace et tranquillitate Ecclesiæ tolerantur, si eos prodi aut accusari non oportuerit, aut aliis bonis non potuerint demonstrari : ita sane ut neque emendationis vigilantia quiescat, corripiendo, degradando, excommunicando, ceterisque coercionibus licitis atque concessis, quæ salvâ unitatis pace in Ecclesiâ quotidie fiunt, caritate servatâ, . . . ne forte aut indisciplinata patientia foveat iniquitatem, aut impatiens disciplina dissipet unitatem. This, among his anti-Donatist treatises, is the best for giving a notion of that part of the controversy on which this parable specially bears.



as his opponents accused him, two Churches, but two conditions of one and the same Church; the present, in which evil is endured in it; the future, in which it shall be free from all evil;—not two bodies of Christ, but one body, in which now are wicked men, but only as evil humours in the natural body, which in the day of perfect health will be expelled and rejected altogether, as never having more than accidentally belonged to it; and he laid especial stress upon this fact, that the Lord himself had not contemplated his Church, in its present state, as perfectly free from evil.\* At this point of the controversy the present parable and that of the Draw-net came in. From these he concluded that, as tares are mingled with wheat, and bad fish with good, so the wicked shall be with the righteous, and shall remain so mingled to the end of the present age;† and this not merely as a historic fact; but that all attempts to have it otherwise are, in this one at least, expressly forbidden. The Donatists were acting as the servants in the parable would have done, if, after the master's

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\* Augustine (*Serm. cœch. 4*): Multi enim corriguntur ut Petrus, multi tolerantur ut Judas, multi nesciuntur donec adveniat Dominus, qui illuminet abscondita tenebrarum, et manifestet consilia cordium. And in another place: Homo sum et inter homines vivo, nec mihi arrogare audeo meliorem domum meam quam arca Noah. He often rebukes the Donatists for their low Pharisaical views concerning what the separation from sinners meant. Thus (*Serm. lxxxviii. 20*): Displacuit tibi quod quisque peccavit, non tetigisti immundum. Redarguisti, corripuisti, monuisti, adhibuisti etiam, si res exegit, congruam et quæ unitatem non violat disciplinam, existi inde:—with much more that is excellent. In another place he asks, Did the prophet of old, who said, 'Go ye out of the midst of her' (*Isa. lii. 11*), himself separate from the Jewish church?—Continendo se a consensu non tetigit immundum: objurgando autem exiit liber in conspectu Dei: cui neque sua Deus peccata imputat, quia non fecit, neque aliena, quia non approbavit, neque negligentiam, quia non tacuit, neque superbiam, quia in unitate permansit. See also *Ad Don. post Coll. 20*. And once more: Cecidit Angelus; numquid inquinavit cælum? Cecidit Adam; numquid inquinavit Paradisum? Cecidit unus de filiis Noe; numquid inquinavit Justi domum? Cecidit Judas; numquid inquinavit apostolorum chorus?—This extract is from one of the sermons in the volume of *Sermones Inediti* of Augustine lately published at Paris. This sermon is among the not very many which bear the stamp of unquestionable genuineness upon them.

† Augustine: Alia est agri conditio, alia quies horrei.

distinct prohibition, they had gone and sought forcibly to root out the tares.

There will be occasion hereafter to note how the Donatists sought to escape the argument drawn from that other parable. They were put to hard shifts to reply to this, but did make answer thus: "By the Lord's own showing, '*the field*' is not the Church, but '*the world*' (ver. 38); the parable, therefore, does not bear on the dispute betwixt us and you in the least, for that is not whether ungodly men should be suffered *in the world* (which we all allow), but whether they should be endured '*in the Church*.'"<sup>\*</sup> But it must be evident to every one not warped by a previous dogmatic interest,<sup>†</sup> that the parable is, as the Lord announces at its first utterance, concerning "the kingdom of heaven," or the Church. It required no special teaching to acquaint the disciples that *in the world* there would ever be a mixture of good and bad; while they could have so little expected the same in the Church, that it was very needful to warn them beforehand, both that they might not be offended, thinking that the promises of God had failed, when the evil should appear; and also that they might know how to behave themselves, when that mystery of iniquity, now foretold, should begin manifestly to work. Nor need the term "*world*" here used perplex us in the least: it was "the

\* See how Augustine answers this argument, *Ad Don. post Coll.* 8. As the Donatists professed to make much of Cyprian's authority, Augustine quotes often from him (as *Con. Gaudent.* ii. 4), words which show that he understood the parable as one relating to the Church: *Nam etsi videntur in Ecclesiâ esse zizania, non tamen impediri debet aut fides aut caritas nostra, ut quoniam zizania esse in Ecclesiâ cernimus, ipsi de Ecclesiâ recedamus. Nobis tantummodo laborandum est, ut frumentum esse possimus, ut cum cœperit frumentum Dominici horreis condi, fructum pro opere nostro et labore capiamus.*

† Commentators who have interpreted the parable, irrespectively of that controversy one way or the other, acknowledge this. Thus Calvin. *Quamquam autem Christus postea subjicit mundum esse agrum, dubium tamen non est, quin proprie hoc nomen ad Ecclesiam aptare voluerit, de quâ exorsus fuerat sermonem. Sed quoniam passim aratrum suum ducturus erat per omnes mundi plagas, ut sibi agros excoleret in toto mundo, ac spargeret vitæ semen, per synechocchen ad mundum translulit, quod parti tantum magis quadrabat.*

world," and therefore was rightly called so, till this seed was sown in it; but thenceforth was the world no longer. No narrower word would have sufficed for Him, in whose prophetic eye the word of the Gospel was contemplated as going forth into all lands, as a seed scattered in every part of the great outfield of the nations.

"*But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed\* tares among the wheat, and went his way.*" Our Lord did not imagine here a form of malice without example, but alluded to ~~one~~ which may have been familiar enough to his hearers, one so easy of execution, involving so little risk, and yet effecting so great and so lasting a mischief, that it is not strange, where cowardice and malice met, that this should often have been the shape in which they displayed themselves. We meet traces of it in many directions. Thus in the Roman law the possibility of this form of injury is contemplated; and a modern writer illustrating Scripture from the manners and habits of the East, with which he had become familiar through a sojourn there, affirms the same to be now practised in India. "See," he says, "that lurking villain watching for the time when his neighbour shall plough his field: he carefully marks the period when the work has been finished, and goes in the night following, and casts in what the natives call *pandinellu*, i. e. pig-paddy; this being of rapid growth, springs up before the good seed, and scatters itself before the other can be reaped, so that the poor owner of the field will be for years before he can get rid of the troublesome weed. But there is another noisome plant which these wretches cast into the ground of those they hate, called *perum-pirandi*, which is more destructive to vegetation than any other plant. Has a man purchased a field out of the hands of another, the offended person says, 'I will plant the *perum-pirandi* in his grounds.'"<sup>†</sup>

Many have made this "*while men slept*" significant, and

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\* In the Vulgate *superseminavit*, as in the Rhemish "*oversowed*," according to the better reading, *ἐπέσπειρεν*, which Lachmann retains.

† ROBERTS' *Oriental Illustrations*, p. 541. A friend who has occupied a judicial station in India confirms this account. We are not with-

have supposed the words to indicate negligence and lack of watchfulness on the part of the rulers in the Church, whereby ungodly men creep into it unawares, introducing errors in doctrine and in practice\* (Acts xx. 29, 30; Jude 4; 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 19). But seeing it is thus indefinitely put, and "*the servants*," who, if any, should have watched, are first designated at a later period of the history, and then with nothing to mark a past omission on their part, the "*men*" who "*slept*" are more probably not such as should have done otherwise, but the phrase is equivalent to "at night," and must not be further prest (Job xxxiii. 15). This enemy seized his opportunity, when all eyes were closed in sleep, and wrought the secret mischief upon which he was intent, and having wrought it undetected, withdrew.

"*The enemy that sowed*" the tares "*is the devil*,"† whom here we behold, not as he works beyond the limits of the Church, deceiving the world, but in his far deeper skill and malignity, as he at once mimics and counterworks the work of Christ: in the words of Chrysostom, "after the prophets, the false prophets; after the Apostles, the false apostles; after

out this form of malice nearer home. Thus in Ireland I have known an outgoing tenant, in spite of his ejection, to sow wild oats in the fields which he was leaving. These, like the plant mentioned above, ripening and seeding themselves before the crops in which they were mingled, it became next to impossible to get rid of them.

\* So Augustine (*Quest. ex Matt.* qu. 9). Cum negligentius agerent præpositi Ecclesiæ: and Chrysostom. H. de Sto. Victore (*Annot. in Matth*) Mortem significat Apostolorum sive corporem prælatorum. But Grotius more rightly: Ἀνθρώπων hic indefinitum est, non universale quasi dicas, cum dormiretur: hoc autem nihil est aliud quam descriptio opportunitatis; and Cajetan's remark has value: Cum dormirent homines, non dicit custodes, si enim dixisset custodes, intelligeremus negligentiam custodum accusari; sed dicit homines, ut inculpabiles intelligamus, naturali somno occupatos. Jerome's *Dormiente patre-familiæ* (*Adv. Lucif.*) is only explicable as other than an error on this view.

† Zizaniator, as therefore he has been called; see DŮ CANGE, s. v. zizanium: and by Tertullian (*De Animâ*, 16), Avenarum superseminatorem, et frumentariæ segetis nocturnum interpolatorem. When Ignatius exhorts the Ephesians (10) that no one be found among them τοῦ διαβόλου βοράνης, no doubt there is an allusion to this parable.

Christ, Antichrist.”\* We may notice here with what distinctness the doctrine concerning Satan and his agency, his active hostility to the blessedness of man, of which there is so little in the Old Testament, comes out in the New. As the lights become brighter, the shadows become deeper; but till the mightier power of good was revealed, we were in mercy not suffered to know how mighty was the power of evil; and even here it is in each case only to the innermost circle of disciples that the explanation concerning Satan is given.† Nor is it less observable that Satan is spoken of as *his* enemy, the enemy of the Son of man; for here, as so often, the great conflict is set forth as rather between Satan and the Son of man, than between Satan and God. It was essential to the great scheme of redemption, that the victory over evil should be a *moral* triumph, not a triumph obtained by a mere putting forth of superior strength.‡ For this end it was most important that man, who lost the battle, should also win it (1 Cor. xv. 21); and therefore as by and through man the kingdom of darkness was to be overthrown, so the enmity of the Serpent was specially directed against the seed of the woman, the Son of man. In the title given him of “*The wicked one*,” the article is emphatic, and points him out as the absolutely evil, the very *ground* of whose being is evil. For as God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John i. 5; Jam. i. 17), so Satan is darkness, and in him is no light; “there is *no* truth in him” (John viii. 44). Man is in a middle position; he detains the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. i. 18); light and darkness in him are struggling; but, whichever may predominate, the other is there, kept down indeed, but still with the possibility of manifesting itself. And thus a redemption is possible for man, for his will is only *perverted*; but Satan’s will is *inverted*, for he has said what no man could ever fully say,

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\* Cf. TERTULLIAN, *De Præscr. Hæret.* 31.

† Bengel (on Ephes. vi. 12) has observed this: Quo apertius quisque Scripturæ liber de œconomia et gloria Christi agit, eo apertius rursum de regno contrario tenebrarum.

‡ In Augustine’s memorable words: Diabolus non potentia Dei, sed justitia superandus erat.

or, at least, act on to the full: "Evil, be thou my good;" and therefore, as far as we can see, a redemption and restoration are impossible for him.

It makes much for the beauty of the parable, and is full of instruction, that wheat and tares are not seeds of different kinds, but that the last is a degenerate or bastard wheat;\* so that, in the very symbols which the Lord uses, the Manichæan

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\* The word ζιζάνιον nowhere occurs except here, and in the Greek and Latin Fathers who have drawn it from hence. The *Etymol. Mag.* gives another derivation of the word besides that quoted by Schleusner, and a better, though even that will scarcely command assent: *παρὰ τὸ σῖτος καὶ ἰζάνω*, that which grows side by side with the wheat. Tertullian always renders it by *avena*, which is incorrect; neither is Augustine sufficiently exact when he says, *Omnis immunditia in segete zizania dicitur*; nor again is it, as our translators would seem to have understood it, the vicia, but the *alpa*, or *lolium temulentum* (in German tollkorn, in French ivraie), having that addition to distinguish it from the *lolium* proper, with which it has nothing but the name in common, and to indicate the vertigo which it causes, when mingled with and eaten in bread. This in the East, despite its poisonous qualities, not uncommonly happens—it being so hard to separate it from the wheat. The assertion made above, that it is a *degenerate* wheat, seems, I think, perfectly made out. Lightfoot quotes these words, distinctly asserting it, from the Talmud, "Wheat and zunin are not seeds of different kinds:" where the gloss is this, "Zunin is a kind of wheat which is changed in the earth, both as to its form and to its nature" And in a passage quoted by Buxtorf (*Lex Talm.* p. 680), this is noted as part of the progressive deterioration of nature, which went hand in hand with man's wickedness; "they sowed wheat, and the earth brought forth zunin" Michaelis indeed (*Mos Recht.* vol. iv. p. 322) says that these Rabbis, who probably never saw a corn-field in their lives, are not to be listened to in the matter: see also Ambrose, *Hexaem.* iii. 10. Yet on the other hand Pliny (*H. N.* xviii. 17) says of the *lolium* as of some other plants, *inter frugum morbos potius quam inter ipsius terræ pestem numeraverim* and an old Scholiast upon the *Georgics*, on the words, *Infelix lolium*, writes thus: *Triticum et hordeum in lolium mutantur*. This quite explains the difficulty of knowing them apart, and the danger, therefore, of plucking up one for the other: since only when the grains begin to form, that of the *lolium* being dark, sometimes nearly black, the difference clearly reveals itself. The tendency of wheat, badly cultivated, to degenerate is well known, and is noted by Columella (*De Re Rust.* ii. 9): *Omne triticum solo uliginoso post tertiam sationem convertitur in siliginem*. The same happened with the grape (see Gesenius on Isa. v. 2): "It brought forth wild grapes" (*labruscas*).—By far the fullest and most satisfying account of the ζιζάνιον is given by Schultetus (*Crit. Sae.* vol. vi. p. 2026); I had not seen it, when the note above was written, but it arrives altogether at the same conclusions.

error is guarded against, which, starting from the (falsely assumed) fact, that wheat and tares are different in kind, proceeds to argue, that as tares, by no process of culture, can become wheat, so neither can the children of the wicked one become children of the kingdom. The Satan of Scripture is no Persian Ahriman, who can create children of darkness; he can only spoil children of light. Calvin \* himself, whatever may have been the case with some who call themselves by his name, is careful to guard against that conclusion here; which, indeed, would have been an abuse of parabolical language, a pressing of accidental circumstances too far, † even supposing that, as with the goats and sheep of Matt. xxv. 32, 33, the tares and wheat had been altogether different in their kinds. But the fact in natural history, noticed above, besides rescuing these words from the possibility of being so abused, gives them a singular fitness for setting forth the origin of evil; which is not so much a *generation* as a *degeneration*; and, as Augustine often expresses it, has not an *efficient*, but only a *deficient*, cause. ‡

The mischief done, the enemy "*went his way*:" and thus the work did not evidently and at once appear to be his. How often, in the Church, the beginnings of evil have been scarcely discernible; how often has that which bore the worst fruit in the end, appeared at first like a higher form of good. St. Paul, indeed, could detect a mystery of iniquity as yet in its obscure beginnings, could detect the *punctum saliens* out of which it

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\* Observing how the Manichæans have abused this passage, he proceeds: Atqui semus, quidquid vitii est tam in diabolo, quam in hominibus, non aliud esse quam integræ naturæ corruptelam; and Augustine on a passage exposed to like abuse (John viii. 44), "Ye are of your father the devil," guards against such, explaining it: Imitando, non nascendo. Cf. Irenæus, *Con. Hær.* iv. 41, 2, and Grotius on Matt. vii. 18.

† Chrysostom rather has right, when (*De Parit. Hom.* 8) he compares the Church to a better Ark. Into the other ark, as the animals entered so they came out; a hawk entered in, and a hawk came forth; a wolf entered in, and a wolf came forth. But to this a hawk has entered in, and a dove comes out; a wolf has entered in, and a sheep issues forth; a serpent has entered in, and a lamb comes forth.

‡ *De Civ. Dei*, xii. 7.

would unfold itself; but to most, evil would not appear as evil till it had grown to more ungodliness: just as the tares did not, to the servants, appear as such till "*the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit.*" Many have noted the great similarity, that, as might be expected, exists between the wheat and this *lolium*, or tare, as long as they are yet in the blade,\* so that they are only distinguishable when the ear is formed; thus fulfilling literally the Lord's words, "*By their fruits ye shall know them.*" Augustine, noting how it was only when the blade began to ripen and bring forth fruit, that the tares began also to appear in their true character, most truly remarks, that it is only the opposition of good which makes evil to appear. "None," he says, "appear evil in the Church, except to him who is good;" and again, "When one shall have begun to be a spiritual man, judging all things, then errors begin to appear to him;"† and in another place he makes the following observations, drawn from the depths of his Christian experience: "It is a great labour of the good, to bear the contrary manners of the wicked; by which he who is not offended has profited little, for the righteous, in proportion as he recedes from his own wickedness, is grieved at that of others."‡ As there must be light, with which to contrast the darkness, height wherewith to measure depth, so there must be holiness to be grieved at unholiness; only the new man in us is grieved at the old either in ourselves or in others.

"So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" These servants are not, as Theo-

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\* The testimony of Jerome, himself resident in Palestine, may here be adduced: *Inter triticum et zizania, quod nos appellamus lolium, quamdiu herba est, et nondum culmus venit ad spicam, grandis similitudo est, et in discernendo aut nulla aut perdifficilis distantia.*

† *Quæst. ex Matt.* qu. 12: where is to be found an admirable exposition of the whole parable.

‡ *Tantum enim torquet justum iniquitas aliena, quantum recedit a suâ.* Cf. *Enarr. in Ps.* cxix. 4, and in *Ps.* cxl.: *Nondum sum totus instauratus ad imaginem fabricatoris mei: coepi resculpi, et ex eâ parte quâ reformor, displicet mihi quod deforme est.*



phylact suggests, the angels (they are the reapers ; ver. 30) ; but men, zealous indeed for the Lord's honour, but zealous with the same zeal as animated those two disciples, who would fain have commanded fire to come down from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritan village (Luke ix. 54). The question which they ask, "*Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field ?*" is not put merely to give opportunity for the householder's reply ; but expresses well the perplexity, the surprise, the inward questionings which must often be felt, which in the first ages, before long custom had too much reconciled to the mournful spectacle, must have been felt very strongly by all who were zealous for God, at the woful and unexpected appearance which the visible Church presented. Where was the "glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" ? Well, indeed, might the faithful have questioned their own spirit, have poured out their hearts in prayer, of which the burden should have been nearly this, "*Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field ? from whence then hath it tares ?*"—didst not thou constitute thy Church to be a pure and holy communion ?—is not the doctrine such as should only produce fruits of righteousness ?—whence then is it that even within the holy precincts themselves, there should be so many who themselves openly sin and cause others to sin ?" \* But in the householder's reply, "*An enemy hath done this,*" the mischief is traced up to its source ; and that not the imperfection, ignorance, weakness, which cling to everything human, and which would prevent even a Divine idea from being more than very inadequately realized by men ; but the distinct counter-

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\* Menken : " This question, '*Whence then hath it tares ?*' is the result of our first study of Church history, and remains afterwards the motto of Church history, and the riddle which should be solved by help of a faithful history ; instead of which, many so-called Church historians [authors of *Ancient Christianity*, and the like], ignorant of the purpose and of the hidden glory of the Church, have their pleasure in the tares, and imagine themselves wonderfully wise and useful, when out of Church history, which ought to be the history of the Light and the Truth, they have made a shameful history of error and wickedness. They have no desire to edify, to further holiness or the knowledge of the truth ; but at the expense of the Church would gratify a proud and ignorant world."

working of the great spiritual enemy; they are "spiritual wickednesses."

In the question which follows, "*Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?*" the temptation to use outward power for the suppression of error, a temptation which the Church itself has sometimes found it difficult to resist, indeed has not resisted, finds its voice and utterance.\* But they who thus speak are unfit to be trusted in this matter. They have often no better than a Jehu's "zeal for the Lord" (2 Kin. x. 16); it is but an Elias-zeal at the best (Luke ix. 54). And therefore "*he said, Nay.*" By this prohibition are doubtless forbidden all such measures for the excision of heretics and other offenders, as shall leave them no room for after repentance or amendment; indeed the prohibition is so clear, so express, so plain, that whenever we meet in Church history with something that looks like the carrying out of this proposal of the servants, we may at once suspect, as Bengel says, that it is not wheat making war on tares, but tares seeking to root out wheat. The reason of the prohibition is given: "*Lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*" This might be, either by rooting up what were now tares, but hereafter should become wheat—children of the wicked one, who, by faith and repentance, should become children of the kingdom;† or it might happen through the mistake of the servants, who, with the best intentions, should fail to distinguish between these and those, and involve good and bad in a common doom. It is only the Lord himself, the Searcher of hearts, who with absolute certainty "knoweth them that are his." The Romish expositors, indeed, and those who in the middle ages wrote in the interests of Rome, in these words, "*lest ye root up the wheat with them,*" find a loophole

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\* Augustine (*Quæst. ex Matt.* qu. 12): Potest ei suboriri voluntas, ut tales homines de rebus humanis auferat, si aliquam temporis habeat facultatem: sed utrum facere debeat, justitiam Dei consult, utrum hoc ei præcipiat vel permittat, et hoc officium esse hominum velit.

† Jerome: Monemur, ne cito amputemus fratrem: quia fieri potest, ut ille, qui hodie noxio depravatus est dogmate, cras resipiscat, et defendere incipiat veritatem.

whereby they may escape the prohibition itself. Thus Aquinas, who urges that the prohibition is only binding, when there exists this danger of plucking up the wheat together with the tares.\* And Maldonatus observes, that in each particular case the householder is to judge whether there be such danger or not. The Pope, he adds, is now the representative of the householder, and to him the question is to be put, "*Wilt thou that we go and gather up the tares?*" and he concludes his exposition with an exhortation to all Catholic princes, that they imitate the zeal of these servants, and rather, like them, need to have their eagerness restrained, than need, as did so many, to be urged on to the task of rooting out heresies and heretics.

Yet this "*Nay*" implies not that the tares shall never be plucked up, but only that this is not the time, nor they the doers. "*Let both grow together until the harvest.*" How much these words tell us concerning Antichrist and the antichristian power; they tell us that evil is not, as so many dream, gradually to wane and to disappear before good, the world to be absorbed into the Church, but is ever to develop itself more fully, even as, on the other side, good is to unfold itself more and more mightily also: till at last they stand face to face, each in its highest manifestation, in the persons of Christ and of Antichrist; on the one hand, an incarnate God, on the other, the man in whom the fulness of all Satanic power will dwell bodily. Both are to grow "*until the harvest,*" till they are ripe, one for destruction, and the other for full salvation. And they are to grow "*together;*" the visible Church is to have its intermixture of good and bad until the end of time; and, by consequence, the fact of bad being found mingled with good will in nowise justify a separation from it, or an attempt to set up a little Church of our own.†

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\* *Summa Theol.* 2<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>æ</sup>, qu. 10: Cum metus iste non subest, . . . non dormiat severitas disciplinæ.

† Calvin's words are excellent: Est enim hæc periculosa tentatio, nullam Ecclesiam putare, ubi non appareat perfecta puritas. Nam quicumque hæc occupatus fuerit, necesse tandem erit, ut, discessione

Where men will attempt this, besides the guilt of transgressing a plain command, it is not difficult to see what fatal effects on their own spiritual life the attempt must have, what darkness it must bring upon them, into what a snare of pride it must cast them. For while, even in the best of men, there is the same intermixture of good and evil as there is outwardly in the Church, such conduct will infallibly lead a man to the wilfully shutting of his eyes, both to the evil which is in himself, and in the little schismatical body which he will then call the Church, since only so the attempt will even seem to be successful.

Thus Augustine often appeals to the fact that the Donatists had not succeeded—they would not themselves dare to assert that they had succeeded—in forming what should even externally appear a pure communion: and since by their own acknowledgment there might be, and probably were, hypocrites and undetected ungodly livers among themselves, this was enough to render all such passages, as *Isai. lii. 1*, as inapplicable to them as to the Catholic Church in its present condition: while yet on the strength of this their assumed purity they displayed a spirit of the most intolerable pride and presumptuous uncharitableness towards the Church from which they had separated. And the same sins cleave more or less to all schismatical bodies, which, under plea of a purer communion, have divided from the Church Catholic:—the smallest of these, from its very smallness persuading itself that it is the most select and purest, being generally the guiltiest here. Not that there is not something in every man which inclines him to the error. Every young Christian, in the time of his first zeal, is tempted to be somewhat of a Donatist in spirit.

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ab omnibus aliis factâ, solus sibi sanctus videatur in mundo, aut peculiarem sectam cum paucis hypocritis instituat. Quid ergo causæ habuit Paulus cur Ecclesiam Dei Corinthi agnosceret? nempe quia Evangelii doctrinam, baptismum, cœnam Domini, quibus symbolis censeri debet Ecclesia, apud eos cernebat.

\* See Augustine (*Coll. Carth. iii. 9*) for an extraordinary instance of this pride on the part of the Donatist adversaries of the Church.

Nay, it would argue little love or holy earnestness in him, if he had not this longing to see the Church of his Saviour a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. But he must learn that the desire, righteous and holy as in itself it is, yet is not to find its fulfilment in this present evil time; that, on the contrary, the suffering from false brethren is one of the pressures upon him, which is meant to wring out from him a more earnest prayer that the kingdom of God may appear.\* He must learn that all self-willed and impatient attempts, such as have been repeated again and again, to anticipate that perfect communion of saints, are indeed works of the flesh; that, however fairly they may promise at the first, no blessing will rest upon them, nor will they for long even *appear* to be crowned with success.†

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\* Fuller (*Holy State*, v. 2) enumerates six reasons why in the kingdom of grace wicked men should be inseparably mingled with godly: "First, because hypocrites can never be severed but by Him that can search the heart; secondly, because if men should make the separation, weak Christians would be counted no Christians, and those who have a grain of grace under a load of imperfections would be counted reprobates; thirdly, because God's vessels of honour for all eternity, not as yet appearing, but wallowing in sin, would be made castaways; fourthly, because God by the mixture of the wicked with the godly will try the watchfulness and patience of his servants; fifthly, because thereby He will bestow many favours on the wicked, to clear his justice and render them the more inexcusable; lastly, because the mixture of the wicked grieving the godly will make them the more heartily pray for the day of judgment."

† Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. xcix. 1*) asks: *Quo se separaturus est Christianus ut non gemat inter falsos fratres? Solitudines petat? sequuntur scandala. Separaturus est se, qui bene proficit, ut nullum omnino hominem patitur? quid si et ipsam antequam proficeret nemo vellet pati? Si ergo quia proficit, nullum hominem vult pati, eo ipso quo non vult aliquem hominem pati, convincitur, quod non profecerit. At quia veloces pedes tibi videris habuisse ad transeundum, præcisurus es pontem?*—The whole passage is too long to quote, but deeply instructive concerning the vanity of every attempt to found a Church on a subjective instead of an objective basis, on the personal holiness of the members instead of recognizing one there to be founded for us, where the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments administered, by those duly commissioned to these offices. How admirable again are his words in another place (*Con. Cresc. iii. 35*): *Fugio paleam, ne hoc sim; non afeam, ne nihil sim: and see also Serm. clxiv. 7, 8.*

Some in modern times fearing lest arguments should be drawn from this parable to the prejudice of any attempts to revive stricter discipline in the Church, have sought to escape these conclusions,\* by urging that in our Lord's explanation no notice is taken of the proposal made by the servants (ver. 28), nor yet of the householder's reply to that proposal (ver. 29). They argue, therefore, that this parable is not instructive of what the conduct of the servants of a heavenly Lord *ought* to be, but merely prophetic of what generally *will* be the case in the Church—that this offer of the servants is merely brought in to afford an opportunity for the master's reply, and that of that the latter is the only significant portion. But assuredly when Christ asserts that it is his purpose, to make a complete and solemn separation at the end, He implicitly forbids,—not the exercise in the mean time of a godly discipline, not, where that has become necessary, absolute exclusion from Church-fellowship—but any attempts to anticipate the final irrevocable separation, of which He has reserved the execution to himself.† That shall not take place till the end of the present dispensation.‡ Not till the time of the harvest§ does the householder command—and then

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\* Steiger, in the *Evang. Kirch. Zeit.* 1833, and an able writer in the *British Critic*, No. lii. p. 385.

† Tertullian (*Apol.* 41): Qui semel æternum judicium destinavit post seculi finem, non præcipitat discretionem quæ est conditio judicii, ante seculi finem.

‡ The συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος, or συντ. τῶν αἰώνων (so Heb. ix. 26), the moment of the passing over from this αἰὼν to the coming, the juncture of the two æras (see Job xxiv. 20, LXX μέχρι συντέλειας φωτός καὶ ἀπώσεως), the present, called αἰὼν ἐνεστώς (Gal. i. 4), or ὁ νῦν αἰὼν (Tit. ii. 12), = κόσμος οὗτος, with the future, termed αἰὼν ἐρχόμενος (Mark x. 30) αἰῶνες ἐπέρχόμενοι (Ephes. ii. 7), αἰὼν ἀμέλλων (Heb. vi. 5), = οἰκουμένη ἡ μέλλουσα (Heb. ii. 5).\* The phrase is equivalent to the τέλος τῶν αἰώνων (1 Cor. x. 11), the extremities of the two æras, the end of the one and the commencement of the other.

§ Bishop Horsley (*Bibl. Crit.* vol. iii. p. 344) distinguishes between the vintage and the harvest, which are the two images under which the consummation of the present age is so commonly represented. "The vintage is always an image of the season of judgment, but the harvest of the ingathering of the objects of God's final mercy. I am not aware that a single unexceptionable instance is to be found, in

he gives the command not to "*the servants*," but to "*the reapers*"—that the tares be gathered out from among the wheat. Not till the end of the world will the Son of man send forth his servants—nor even then his earthly ministering servants,\* but "*his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend,† and all which do iniquity*"—in the words of Zephaniah (i. 3), "*the stumbling-blocks with the wicked.*"

The lot of the tares is to be gathered into bundles‡ and consumed with fire. In David's words (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7),

which the harvest is a type of judgment. In Rev. xiv. 15, 16, the sickle is thrust into the ripe harvest, and the earth is reaped, i. e., the elect are gathered from the four winds of heaven. The wheat of God is gathered into his barn (Matt. xiii. 30). After this reaping of the earth the sickle is applied to the clusters of the vine, and they are cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God (Rev. xiv. 18-20). This is judgment. In Joel iii. 13, the ripe harvest is the harvest of the vine, i. e., the grapes fit for gathering, as appears by the context. In Jer. li. 33, the act of threshing the corn upon the floor, not the harvest, is the image of judgment. It is true the burning of the tares in our Saviour's parable (Matt. xiii.) is a work of judgment, and of the time of harvest, previous to the binding of the sheaves; but it is an accidental adjunct of the business, not the harvest itself.—It may be a question whether the manner in which he makes our parable fit into his scheme is quite satisfactory.

\* Augustine. *Audes usurpare officium alienum, quod nec in messo erit tuum?* And Cyprian (with reference to 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21). *Nos operam demus et, quantum possumus, laboremus, ut vas aureum et argenteum simus. Cæterum fictilia vasa confringere Domino soli concessum est, cui et virga ferrea data est.* Jerome (*Adv. Lucif.*): *Nemo potest Christi palmam sibi assumere, nemo ante diem judicii de hominibus judicare. Si jam mundata est Ecclesia, quid Domino reservamus?*

† *Σκάνδαλον* (in its classical form *σκανδαλισμός*) is that part of a trap or snare on which the bait is placed, and which being touched by the animal, gives way and causes the snare to draw suddenly tight; then generally a snare. In the New Testament it is transferred to spiritual things, and includes whatever, entangling as it were men's feet, might cause them to fall; it is therefore = *πρόσκομμα*, and allied closely in meaning to *παγίς* and *θήρα*, with which we find it used Rom. xi. 9.

‡ Augustine explains this something in the fashion of Dante's hell, in which the wicked of one kind are gathered into one place; for on this gathering into bundles, he says: *Hoc est, rapaces cum rapacibus, adulteros cum adulteris, homicidas cum homicidiis, fures cum furibus, derisores cum derisoribus, similes cum similibus.*

"The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, . . . and they shall be utterly burned with fire;" or, as it is here expressed, the angels "*shall cast them into the furnace of fire.*" Elsewhere (Mark ix. 43-48), the woe of hell is described under an image borrowed from the valley of the children of Hinnom, where carcasses were cast out, from time to time to be consumed with fire; here from that most fearful of all forms of punishment, one not indeed in use among the Jews, for we must look at David's act (2 Sam. xii. 31) as an excess of severity,\* but one with which they were not unacquainted, that is, death by fire (Gen. xxxviii. 24; 1 Cor. xiii. 3). It was in use among the Chaldeans (Jer. xlix. 22; Dan. iii. 6), and in the Jewish tradition, which is probably of great antiquity, Nimrod cast Abraham into a furnace of fire, for refusing to worship his false gods. It was one of the forms of cruel death with which Antiochus sought to overcome the heroic constancy of the Jewish confessors in the time of the Maccabees (2 Macc. vii.). In modern times, Charadin makes mention of penal furnaces in Persia.† That dreadful punishment by fire supplying the image here, makes exceedingly improbable the explanation of the "*gnashing of teeth*" given by some, who understand it as a chattering, the expression of the pain arising from excessive cold;‡ so that they imagine a kind of Dantean hell, with alternations of cold and heat, alike unendurable. But the "*wailing and gnashing of teeth*" are evidently no more than expressions generally of rage and impatience (Acts vii. 54), under the sense of intolerable pain and unutterable loss.

"*Then,*" after it has been thus done with the wicked,

\* So too that of Herod the Great, recorded by Josephus, *B J. i.* 33, 4

† *Voy en Perse*, Langlès' ed. vol. vi. p. 118.

‡ See SUICER, s.v. *βρυγμός*, which some make = *τρισμαὶς ἐδόντων*, but it is simpler to say with Bernard: "Fletus ex dolore, stridor dentium ex furore; for in Cyprian's words (*Ad Demet.*): Erit tunc sine fructu pœnitentiæ dolor, pœnæ inanis ploratio, et inefficax deprecatio. See AMBROSE, *Exp. in Luc.* vii. 205, 206, and GERHARD, *Loc. Theoll.* xxxi. 6, 46.



"*shall the righteous shine forth\* as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*" As fire was the element of the dark and cruel kingdom of hell, so is *light* of the pure heavenly kingdom.† Then, when the dark hindering element is removed, shall this element of light, which was before struggling with and obstructed by it, come forth in its full brightness (see Col. iii. 3; Rom. viii. 18; Prov. xxv. 4, 5). A glory shall be revealed in the saints: not merely brought to them, and added from without; but rather a glory which they before had, but which did not before evidently appear, shall burst forth and show itself openly, as once in the days of his flesh, at the moment of his Transfiguration, did the hidden glory of our Lord. That shall be the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God;" they shall shine forth as the sun, when the clouds are rolled away (Dan. xii. 3); they shall evidently appear, and be acknow-

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\* Ἐκλάμψουσιν, in which full force is to be given to the preposition. Schleusner indeed says: Parum differt a simpliciter λάμπω,—but Passow: Hervorstrahlen, sich plötzlich in aller Heulicheit hervor-thun. There are two beautiful similitudes in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (iii. sim. 3 and 4), which set forth the same truth, though under a different image. The Seer is shown in the first a number of trees, all which while it is winter are alike without their leaves, and seeming therefore to him all alike dead; and he is told that as the dry and the green trees are not distinguishable from one another in the winter, while all alike are leafless and bare, so neither in the present age are the just from sinners. In the second, he is again shown the trees, but now some of them are putting forth leaves, while others are still remaining bare. Thus shall it be in the future age, which for the just shall be a summer, and they shall be declared openly, while their hidden life shall then manifest itself; but for the sinners it shall still be winter, and they, remaining without leaf or fruit, shall as dry wood be cut down for the burning. The resemblance between these visions and singularly beautiful passages in Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. xxxvi. 2, and in Ps. cxlviii. 13*), where exactly the same image is used, is very remarkable; and again he says of the Christian as he is now (*in 1 Ep. Joh. Tract. 5*), Gloria ejus occulta est, cum venerit Dominus, tunc apparebit gloria. Viget enim, sed adhuc in hieme; viget radix, sed quasi aridi sunt rami. Intus est medulla quæ viget, intus sunt folia arborum, intus fructus: sed æstatem expectant. Cf. Minucius Felix (p. 329, ed. Ouzel.): Ita corpus in seculo, ut arbores in hiberno occultant virorem ariditate mentis. Quid festinas ut crudâ adhuc hieme reviviscat et redeat? Expectandum nobis etiam corporis ver est.

† It is exactly thus that in the Mohammedan theology the good angels are compact of *light*, and the evil ones of *fire*.

ledged by all, as "the children of light," of that God who is "the Father of Lights"\* (Jam. i. 17). And then, but not till then, shall be accomplished those glorious prophecies so often repeated in the Old Testament: "Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isai. lii. 1); "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. xiv. 21); "Thy people also shall be all righteous" (Isai. lx. 21). Cf. Isai. xxxv. 8; Joel iii. 17; Ezck. xxxvii. 21-27; Zeph. iii. 13.

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\* Calvin · Insignis consolatio, quod filii Dei qui nunc vel squalore obsiti jacent, vel latent nullo in pretio, vel etiam probris cooperti sunt, tunc quasi sereno cœlo, et discussis omnibus nebulis, vere et ad liquidum semel conspicui fulgebunt. suos in sublime attollet Filius Dei, et omnem fuliginem absterget, quâ nunc eorum fulgor obruitur—It is the saying of a Jewish expositor of Ps lxxii : Quemadmodum Sol et Luna illuminant hoc seculum, ita futurum est ut justî illuminent seculum futurum.

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### PARABLE III.

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#### THE MUSTARD-SEED.

MATT. xiii. 31, 32; MARK iv. 30-32; LUKE xiii. 18, 19.

THIS parable, and the following, might seem, at first sight, merely repetitions of the same truth; but in this, as in every other case, upon nearer inspection essential differences reveal themselves. That other parable, of the Leaven, is concerning the kingdom of God which "cometh not with observation;" this is concerning that same kingdom as it displays itself openly, and cannot be hid: that declares the *intensive*, this the *extensive*, development of the Gospel. That sets forth the power and action of the truth on the world brought in contact with it; this the power of the truth to develop itself from within; as the tree shut up within the seed, which will unfold itself according to the inward law of its own being. They have indeed this in common, that they describe the small and slight beginnings, the gradual progress, and the final marvellous increase of the Church—or how, to use another image, the stone cut out without hands should become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth (Dan. ii. 34, 35).

Chrysostom\* traces finely the connexion between this parable and those that have gone before. In that of the Sower, the disciples had heard that three parts of the seed sown perished, and only a fourth part prospered; again they had heard in that of the Tares, of the further hindrances which beset even this part that survived; and now, lest they should

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\* So also Lyser, with more immediate reference to the question with which the parable is introduced in St. Mark (iv. 30): Cum ea sit Evangelii sors, ut tam multa ejus fructum impediunt, et eadem Satanæ tot modis insidietur, ut vix fructus aliquis sperari possit, quid de illo dicemus? poteritne in rerum naturâ aliquid inveniri, quod ejus exilitatem excusare, illudque contemptu vindicare queat?

be tempted quite to lose heart and to despair, these two parables are spoken for their encouragement. "My kingdom," the Lord would say, "will survive these losses, and surmount these hindrances, until, small as its first beginnings may appear, it will, like a mighty tree, fill the earth with its branches,—like potent leaven, diffuse its influence through all the world." His comparison of the growth of his kingdom to that of a tree, must have been one with which many of his hearers were already familiar from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The growth of a worldly kingdom had been set forth under this image (Dan. iv. 10-12; Ezek. xxxi. 3-9\*), that also of the kingdom of God (Ezek. xvii. 22-24; Ps. lxxx. 8†). But why, it may be asked, is of all trees a *mustard-tree*‡ chosen here? Many nobler plants, as the vine, or taller trees, as the cedar, might have been named. Doubtless this is chosen, not with reference to ultimate greatness, in which many surpass it, but to the proportion between the smallness of the seed and the greatness of the plant which unfolds itself therefrom. For this is the point to which the Lord calls especial attention,—not its greatness in itself, but its greatness when compared with the seed from whence it springs; since what He desired to set before his disciples was not merely that his kingdom should be glorious, but that it should be glorious despite its weak and slight and despised beginnings.

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\* See HAVERNICK, *Comm. ub. Daniel*, p. 139.

† In a striking poem, found in the Appendix to FELL's *Cyprian*, the growth of the kingdom of God, under the figure of that of a tree, is beautifully set forth.

‡ The most accurate inquiries of naturalists would seem to point out as the mustard-tree of this parable, not that which goes by this name in Western Europe, but the *Salvadora Persica*, commonly called in Syria now *khardal*. So Dr. Lindley, in his *Flora Indica*; and see in the *Athenæum* of March 23, 1844, an interesting paper by Dr. Royle, read before the Asiatic Society. Captains Irby and Mangles, describing this *khardal*, say, "It has a pleasant, though a strong aromatic taste, exactly resembling mustard, and if taken in any quantity, produces a similar irritability of the nose and eyes." There is, on the other hand, a learned discussion in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1844, calling in question Dr. Royle's conclusions; but not seriously shaking them.

Nor, indeed, was the mustard-seed, though in appearance so trivial, altogether without its significance and acknowledged worth in antiquity. It ranked among the nobler Pythagorean symbols; it was esteemed to possess medicinal virtues against the bites of venomous creatures and against poisons, and was used as a remedy in many diseases.\* Nor can I, with a modern interpreter, find anything so very ridiculous in the supposition that the Saviour chose this seed on account of further qualities possessed by it, which gave it a peculiar aptness to illustrate the truth which He had in hand. Its heat, its fiery vigour, the fact that only through being bruised it gives out its best virtues, and all this under so insignificant an appearance and in so small a compass, may well have moved Him to select this seed under the image of which to set forth the destinies of that word of the kingdom, that doctrine of a crucified Redeemer; which, though to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block, should prove to them that believed "the power of God unto salvation."†

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\* PLIN. *H N* xx 87. Plautus applies to it a harder epithet, *sinapis scelerata*, because of its pungency, which draws tears from the eyes; and Columella's line is often quoted:

Sequē lacessenti fletum factura sinapis.

This, too, may be a part of its fitness here; for neither is the Gospel all sweets, but may be compared (Clement of Alexandria has compared it) to the mustard-seed, ἐπιδάκνουσαν ὡφελίμως τὴν ψυχὴν. The comparison is carried out to greater length in the homily of an uncertain author: Sicut sinapis granum cum sumimus, vultu contristamur, fronte contrahimur, ad lacrimas permovemur, et ipsam salubritatem corporis nostri cum quodam fletu austeritatis accipimus, . . . ita ergo et cum fidei Christianæ mandata percipimus, contristamur animo, affligimur corpore, ad lacrimas permovemur, et ipsam salutem nostram cum quodam fletu ac mœrore consequimur. Moreover, that its active energy, which in these quotations is noted, will make it as apt an emblem of the good as the ill; and as such it was used, according to Eastern tradition, by Alexander the Great, for when Darius sent him a barrel full of sesame, to acquaint him with the number of his soldiers, he sent a bag full of mustard-seed in return, to indicate the active, fiery, biting courage of his (D'HERBELOT, *Biblioth. Orient.* s. v. Escandér).

† Thus the author of a sermon which has been attributed to Augustine (*Serm.* 87, *Appendix*), and to Ambrose: Sicut enim granum

But not Christ's doctrine merely, nor yet even the Church which He planted upon earth, is this grain of mustard-seed in its central meaning. He is himself at once the mustard-seed\* and the Man that sowed it. The mustard-seed, for the Church was originally enclosed in Him, and from Him unfolded, having as much oneness of life with Him as the tree with the seed in which it was originally shut up, and out of which it grew; the Sower, in that by a free act of his own, He gave *himself* to that death whereby He became the Author of life unto many;† as Himself has said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). And the field in which He sowed this seed was the world;—"his field," or, as St. Luke expresses it (xiii. 19), "his garden;" for the world was made by Him, and when He came to it, "He came unto his own."

This seed, when cast into the ground, is "*the least of all seeds*,"—words which have often perplexed interpreters, as there are many seeds, as of poppy or rue, that are smaller. Yet difficulties of this kind are not worth making; it is sufficient to know that "small as a grain of mustard-seed" was a

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sinapis primâ fronte speciei suæ est parvum, vile, despectum, non saporem præstans, non odorem circumferens, non indicans suavitatem: at ubi terrâ cœperit, statim odorem suum fundit, acrimoniam exhibet, cibum flammæ saporis exhalat, et tanto fervoris calore succenditur, ut mirum sit in tam frivolis [granis] tantum ignem fuisse conclusum, . . . ita ergo et fides Christiana primâ fronte videtur esse parva, vilis, et tenuis, non potentiam suam ostendens, non superbiam præferens, non gratiam subministrans. There is great fitness and beauty in the occasion upon which this sermon was preached, namely, the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, the manner of whose death is well known.—There is much also that is instructive, with somewhat merely fanciful, in the remarks which Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* vii. 176-186) makes on this parable.

\* See a fragment of Irenæus (p. 347, Bened. ed.), who also notes how the mustard-seed was selected for its fiery and austere qualities (τὸ πυρράκις καὶ αὐστηρόν). So TERTULLIAN, *Adv. Marc.* iv. 30.

† Early Christian art had a true insight into this. DIDRON (*Iconographie Chrétienne*, p. 208) describes this as a frequent symbol: Le Christ dans un tombeau: de sa bouche sort un arbre, sur les branches duquel sont les apôtres.

proverbial expression among the Jews\* for something exceedingly minute (see Luke xvii. 6). The Lord, in his popular teaching, adhered to the popular language. And was not his kingdom even such? What, to the eye of flesh, could be less magnificent, what could have less of promise, than the commencements of that kingdom in his own person? Growing up in a distant and despised province, till his thirtieth year. He did not emerge from the bosom of his family; then taught for two or three years in the neighbouring towns and villages, and occasionally at Jerusalem; made a few converts, chiefly among the poor and unlearned; and at length, falling into the hands of his enemies, without an attempt on his own part or that of his followers to release Him, died the shameful death of the cross: such, and so slight, was the commencement of the universal kingdom of God. For in this that kingdom differs from the great schemes of this world; these last have a proud beginning, a shameful and miserable end—towers of Babel, which at first threaten to be as high as heaven, but end in being a deserted misshapen heap of slime and bricks; while the works of God, and most of all his great work, his Church, have a slight and unobserved beginning, with gradual increase, and a glorious consummation. So is it with his kingdom in the world; so is it with his kingdom in every single heart: there too the word of Christ falls like a slight mustard-seed, seeming to promise little, but issuing, if allowed to grow, in great and marvellous results.†

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\* So also in the Coran (*Sur.* 31): "Oh my son, verily every matter, whether good or bad, though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and be hidden in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, God will bring the same to light."

† Jerome (*Comm. in Matt.* in loc.) has a striking passage noting the difference, in this respect, between the Gospel and every system of human philosophy; the last promising much and performing little, the other promising little and performing much: *Prædicatio Evangelii minima est omnibus disciplinis. Ad primam quippe doctrinam, fidem non habet veritatis, hominem Deum, Deum mortuum, et scandalum crucis prædicans. Confer hujusmodi doctrinam dogmatibus philosophorum, et libris eorum, splendori eloquentiæ, et compositioni sermonum, et videbis quanto minor sit cæteris semini-*

That which was the smallest of all seeds, "*when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*"

In hot countries, as in Judæa, the mustard-tree attains a size which it is never known to reach in our colder latitudes, sometimes so great as to allow a man to climb up into its branches (though this, indeed, is mentioned as a remarkable thing),\* or to ride on horseback under them, as a traveller in Chili mentions that he has done. Maldonatus assures us, that in Spain he has himself seen great ovens heated with its branches; he mentions further, that birds are exceedingly partial to the seed, so that when it is advancing to ripeness, he has often seen them lighting in very great numbers on its boughs, which, however, were strong enough to sustain the weight without being broken. This fact of the fondness of birds for the seeds, and the manner in which, therefore, they congregated in the branches, was probably familiar to our Lord's hearers as well. They, too, had beheld them congregating in the branches of the tree, whose seed thus served them for meat; so that there must have been a singular liveliness in the image which the parable presented to their minds.

Neither need we suppose this last circumstance introduced merely for the purpose of completing the picture, and presenting it in a more lively manner to the eye: but rather, in the birds flocking to the boughs of the mustard-tree when it had grown great, and there finding shelter and food (Ezek. xvii. 23, "*under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing*"), we are to recognize a prophecy of the refuge and defence that should be for all men in the Church: how that multitudes should thither make their resort, finding their protection from worldly op-

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bus sementis Evangelii. Sed illa cum creverit, nihil mordax, nihil vividum, nihil vitale demonstrat, sed totum flaccidum marcidumque, et mollium ebullit in olera et in herbas quæ cito arescunt et corrumpunt. Hæc autem prædicatio quæ parva videbatur in principio, cum vel in animâ credentis, vel in toto mundo sata fuerit, non exurgit in olera, sed crescit in arborem.

\* LIGHTFOOT, *Hor. Heb.* in loc.



pression, as well as the satisfaction for all the needs and wants of their souls;\* and finding true the words of the son of Sirach (xiv. 20, 26, 27), "Blessed is the man that doth meditate good things in Wisdom. . . . He shall set his children under her shelter, and shall lodge under her branches; by her he shall be covered from heat, and in her glory shall he dwell." Theophylact concludes his exposition of the parable with this practical application: "And be thou also such a grain of mustard,—small, indeed, in appearance, for it becomes thee not to make a spectacle of thy virtue, but fervent, and zealous, and energetic, and armed to reprove."

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\* Augustine (*Serm.* xlv. 2): Crevit Ecclesia, crediderunt gentes, victi sunt terræ principes sub nomine Christi, ut essent victores in orbe terrarum. Persequebantur ante Christianos pro idolis, persequuntur idola propter Christum. Omnes confugiunt ad auxilium Ecclesiæ, in omni pressurâ, in omni tribulatione suâ. Crevit illud granum sinapis, veniunt volatilia cœli, superbi sæculi et acquiescunt sub ramis ejus.

## PARABLE IV.

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### THE LEAVEN.

MATTHEW xiii. 33; LUKE xiii. 20, 21.

THIS parable relates also to the marvellous increase of the kingdom of God; but, while the last set forth its outward visible manifestation, this declares its hidden mysterious working, its influence on the world which on all sides it touches. The mustard-seed does not for some while attract observation; nor, until it has grown to some height, do the birds of the air light upon its branches; but the active working of the leaven has been from the very beginning, from the first moment that it was hidden in the lump. It has indeed been urged against this and every other scheme which interprets the leaven in a favourable sense, that leaven is most frequently used in the Scripture as the symbol of something evil (1 Cor. v. 7; Luke xii. 1; Gal. v. 9). This is undoubtedly true, and as such it was forbidden in the offerings under the Law (Exod. xiii. 3; Lev. ii. 11; Amos iv. 5), though not without an exception (Lev. xxiii. 17). The strict command to the children of Israel, that they should carefully put away every particle of leaven out of their houses during the Pass-over week, rests on this view of it as evil; they were thus reminded that if they would rightly keep the feast, they must seek to cleanse their hearts from all workings of malice and wickedness.\* When leaven is thus used in an evil sense, its

\* See our Collect for the First Sunday after Easter.—The Jews termed the figmentum malum, that in man which lusteth against the spirit, and hinders him from doing the things that he would, “the leaven in the lump;” and the reason is given in the book Sohar: *Prava concupiscentia vocatur fermentum, quia parum ejus cor pervadit, et in tantum exturgescit, ut findatur pectus* (see SCHÖEFLIGEN’S *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 507). The Romans had the same dislike to the use of leaven in sacred things: *Farinam fermento imbutam attingere flamini Diali*

tendencies to make sour and to corrupt are those which come most prominently out. Yet, because such is its most frequent use in Scripture, there needs not therefore to interpret the parable, as Gurtler,\* Teelman,† and also some little bands of modern separatists‡ (whose motive, of course, is obvious) have done, as, though it were a prophecy of the heresies and corruptions which should mingle with and adulterate the pure doctrine of the Gospel,—as though it were, in fact, a prophecy of the workings of the future mystery of iniquity. These expositors make the Woman that hides the leaven in the meal to be the apostate Church, which, with its ministers, they observe is often represented under this image; they adduce Prov. ix. 13; Rev. xvii. 1; Zech. v. 7-11. But if this interpretation were the true one, could it thus be said that at any time the whole Church was penetrated through and through with the leaven of false doctrine, the gates of hell would, indeed, have prevailed against it; and from whence it should ever have become unleavened again, it is difficult to understand.

But the admitted fact that leaven is, in Scripture, most

*fas non est* (*Gell* x 15, 19). Plutarch (*Quæst Rom.* 109) gives no doubt the true explanation. "The leaven itself is born from corruption, and corrupts the mass with which it is mingled." Thus it comes to pass that ἀποὶ καθολοῖ is used as = ἀζύμοι. So Jerome (*Ep.* 31) gives the reason why honey was forbidden in the Levitical offerings (Lev. ii 11): *Apud Deum enim nihil voluptuosum, nihil tantum suave placet; nisi quod in se habet mordacis aliquid veritatis.* These omissions had doubtless the same symbolical meaning, as the casting away of the gall among the Romans in the victims offered to the nuptial Juno—It was the feeling of the unsuitableness of leaven in *sacris* which, in part, caused the Latin Church to contend so earnestly against the use of fermented bread in the Eucharist, calling those who used it fermentarii, though a historical interest also mingled in the question (see AUGUSTI, *Handb. d. Christl. Archæol.* vol. ii. p. 662).

\* *Syst. Theol. Prophet.* p. 590.

† *Comm. in Luc* xvi p. 59, seq.—Vittinga gives, with great impartiality, two entirely independent expositions of the parable, taking first the leaven in a good, then in an evil sense, but decides absolutely for neither.

‡ *Brief Exposition of Matthew* xiii., by J. N. DABBY, 1845, p. 40. He makes, in the same way, the parable of the mustard-seed to be a prophecy of the upgrowth of a proud world-hierarchy.

commonly the type of something false and corrupting, need not drive us into any such embarrassment. It was not, therefore, the less free to use it in a good sense. In those other passages, the puffing up, disturbing, souring properties which it has were the prominent points of comparison; in the present, its warmth,\* its penetrative energy, the power which a little of it has to lend its own savour and virtue to much wherewith it is brought in contact. The figurative language of Scripture is not so stereotyped, that one figure must always stand for one and the same thing. The devil is "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8); yet this does not hinder the same title from being applied to Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. v. 5); only there the subtlety and fierceness of the animal formed the point of comparison, here the nobility and kingliness and conquering strength.† St. Cyril‡ then could scarcely have had this parable in his mind, when he said: "Leaven, in the inspired writings, is *always* taken as the type of naughtiness and sin." Ignatius shows rather by his own application of the image, how it may be freely used, now in a good, now in a bad sense; for, warning against judaizing practices, he writes: "Lay aside the evil leaven which has grown old and maketh sour, and be transmuted into the new leaven, which is Christ Jesus."§ Nor is it to be forgotten that if, on one side, the operation of leaven upon meal presents an analogy to something evil in the spiritual world, it does also on the other to something good; all agreeing that its effects on bread are to render it more tasteful, lighter, more nourishing, and generally more wholesome.

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\* Ζύμη from ζέω, as fermentum (=fervimentum) from ferveo: leaven (in French, levain), from levare, to lift up.

† See AUGUSTINE (*Serm.* lxxiii. 2): Quid enim tam distat ab invicem, quam Christus et Diabolus? Tamen leo et Christus est appellatus, et Diabolus . . . Ille leo, propter fortitudinem: ille leo, propter feritatem. Ille leo, ad vincendum. ille leo, ad nocendum. Cf. *Serm.* xxxii. 8.

‡ *Hom. Paschal.* 19.

§ *Ad Magnes.* 10. Cf. GREGORY NAZ. (*Orat.* xxxvi. 90), who says that Christ by his Incarnation sanctified men, ὥσπερ ζύμη γενόμενος τῷ παντὶ φυράματι, καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐνώσας.

There is no need, then, to take the parable in other than its obvious sense,—that it is concerning the diffusion, and not the corruptions, of the Gospel. By the leaven we are to understand the word of the kingdom, which Word, in its highest sense, Christ himself was. As the mustard-seed, out of which a mighty tree was to grow, was “*the least of all seeds*,” so the leaven is also something apparently of slight account, and yet, at the same time, mighty in operation; in this fitly setting forth Him, of whom it was said, “He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;” but then presently again, “By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, . . . and he shall divide the spoil with the strong” (Isai. liii. 2, 11, 12); and who, when He had communicated of his life and spirit to his apostles, enabled them too in their turn, poor and mean and unlearned as they were, to become “the salt of the earth,” the leaven of the world. For, in Chrysostom’s words, “that which is once leavened becomes leaven to the rest; since as the spark when it takes hold of wood, makes that which is already kindled to transmit the flame, and so seizes still upon more, thus it is also with the preaching of the word.”\*

Is it only a part of the natural machinery of the parable, the act of kneading being proper to women, that it should be “*a woman*” who hides the leaven in the three measures of meal? or may we look for something more in it than this? A comparison with Luke xv. 8 (*the woman* who loses and then seeks and finds her piece of money) may suggest that the divine Wisdom, the Holy Spirit, which is the sanctifying power in humanity (and it is of that sanctifying that the word is here), may be meant. But if it be asked, Why represented as a woman? to this it may be replied, that the organ of the Spirit’s working is the Church, which evidently would be most

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\* In Matt. Hom. 46; see also Con. Ignaviam, Hom. iii. 2. So Cajetan: Christi discipuli; prima regni cælorum membra, spiritu penetrârunt corda hominum, crudaque ac acerba ad maturitatem ac saporem cælestis vitæ promoverunt.

fitly represented under this image. In and through the Church the Spirit's work proceeds: only as the Spirit dwells in the Church (Rev. xxii. 7), is that able to mingle a nobler element in the mass of humanity, to leaven the world. So again, why should "*three*" measures of meal be mentioned? It might be enough to answer, because it was just so much as would be often mixed at one time (Gen. xviii. 6; Judg. vi. 19; 1 Sam. i. 24\*). Yet the "*three*" may intend something more, may prophesy of the spread of the Gospel through the three parts then known of the world; or, as Augustine will have it, of the ultimate leavening of the whole human race, derived from the three sons of Noah; which is nearly the same thing. And those who, like Jerome and Ambrose, find in it a pledge of the sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, are not upon a different track, if, as has not been ill suggested, Shem, Japheth, and Ham, do indeed answer to these three elements, spirit, soul, and body, which together make up the man—the one or other element having, as is plainly the case, predominance in the descendants severally of the three.

But the leaven which is thus mingled with the lump, which acts on and coalesces with it, is at the same time different from it; for the woman *took* it from elsewhere to mingle it therein: and even such is the Gospel, a kingdom not of this world (John xviii. 36), not the unfolding of any powers which already existed therein, a kingdom not rising, as those other kingdoms, "out of the earth" (Dan. vii. 17), but a new power brought into the world from above; not a philosophy, but a Revelation. The Gospel of Christ was a new and quickening power cast into the midst of an old and dying world, a centre of life round which all the moral energies which still survived, and all which itself should awaken, might form and gather;—by the help of which the world might constitute itself anew.†

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\* In the two last places the Septuagint has *τρία μέτρα*.

† Augustine, in whose time the fading away of all the glory of the ancient world was daily becoming more apparent (*mundus tantâ rerum labe contritus, ut etiam speciem seductionis amisert*), delighted to contemplate and to present the coming of Christ under this aspect. Thus

Nor is this leaven said merely to have been mingled with, but to have been *hidden* in the mass which it renewed. For the true renovation, that which God effects, is ever thus from the inward to the outward; it begins in the inner spiritual world, though it does not end there: for it fails not to bring about, in good time, a mighty change also in the outward and visible world. This was wonderfully exemplified in the early history of Christianity. The leaven was effectually hidden. How striking is the entire ignorance which heathen writers betray of all that was going forward a little below the surface of society,—the manner in which they overlooked the mighty change which was preparing; and this, not merely at the first, when the mustard-tree might well escape notice, but, with slight exceptions, even up to the very moment when the triumph of Christianity was at hand. The leaven was hidden, yet by degrees it made itself felt, till at length the whole Roman world was, more or less, leavened by it. Nor must we forget, that the mere external conversion of that whole world gives us a very inadequate measure of the work which had to be done: besides this, there was the eradication of the innumerable heathen practices and customs and feelings which had enwoven and entwined their fibres round the very heart of society; a work which lagged very considerably behind the other, and which, in fact, was never thoroughly accomplished till the whole structure of Roman society had gone to pieces, and the new Teutonic framework had been erected in its room.

But while much has thus been effected, while the leavening of the mass has never ceased to go forward, yet the promise of the parable has hitherto been realized only in a very im-

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*Serm. lxxxii.*: Parum tibi prestatit Deus, quia in senectute mundi misit tibi Christum, ut tunc te reficiat, quando omnia deficiunt? . . . Venit cum omnia veterascerent, et novum te fecit. Res facta, res condita, res peritura jam vergebat in occasum. Necesse erat ut abundaret laboribus: venit ille, et consolari te inter labores, et promittere tibi in sempiternum quietem. Noli adhærere velle seni mundo, et nolle juvenescere in Christo, qui tibi dicit: Perit mundus, senescit mundus, deficit mundus, laborat anhelitu senectutis. Noli timere, renovabitur juvenus tua sicut aquilæ.

perfect measure, and we cannot consider these words, "*till the whole is leavened*," as less than a prophecy of a final complete triumph of the Gospel—that it will diffuse itself through all nations, and purify and ennoble all life. We may also fairly see in these words a promise and an assurance that the word of life, received into any single heart, shall not there cease its effectual working, till it has brought the whole man into obedience to it, sanctifying him wholly, so that he shall be altogether a new creation in Christ Jesus.\* It shall claim every region of man's being as its own, and make itself felt through all. In fact, the parable does nothing less than set forth to us the mystery of regeneration, both in its first act, which can be but once, as the leaven is but once hidden; and also in the consequent renewal by the Holy Spirit, which, as the ulterior working of the leaven, is continual and progressive. This side of the truth is that exclusively brought out by Hammond, who thus paraphrases our Lord's words: "The Gospel hath such a secret invisible influence on the hearts of men, to change them and affect them, and all the actions that flow from them, that it is fitly resembled to leaven, so mixed thoroughly with the whole, that although it appeareth not in any part of it visibly, yet every part hath a tincture from it." We may fitly conclude, in the words of St. Ambrose: "May the Holy Church, which is figured under the type of this woman in the Gospel, whose meal are we, hide the Lord Jesus in the innermost places of our hearts, till the warmth of the Divine wisdom penetrate into the most secret recesses of our souls."†

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\* Corn. a Lapide quotes from an earlier commentator: *Dicit autem, Donec fermentatum est totum, quia caritas in mente nostrâ recondita eo usque crescere debet, ut totam mentem in sui perfectionem commutet, quod hic quidem inchoatur, in futuro vero perficitur.*

† *Exp in Luc.* vii. 187.—Clemens of Alexandria (p. 694, Potter's ed) gives an admirable exposition of the parable, and in very few words. The kingdom of heaven, he says, is likened to leaven, ὅτι ἡ ἰσχύς τοῦ Λόγου σύντομος οὖσα καὶ δυνατή, πάντα τὸν καταδεξάμενον καὶ ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ κτησάμενον αὐτήν, ἐπικεκρυμμένως τε καὶ ἀφανῶς πρὸς αὐτήν ἔλκει, καὶ τὸ πᾶν αὐτοῦ σύστημα εἰς ἐνόητα συνάγει.



## PARABLE V.

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### THE HID TREASURE.

MATTHEW XIII. 44.

THE kingdom of God is not merely a general, it is also an individual, thing; it is not merely a tree overshadowing the earth, or leaven leavening the world, but each man must have it for himself, and make it his own by a distinct act of his own will. He cannot be a Christian without knowing it. He may indeed come under the shadow of this great tree, and partake of many blessings of its shelter; he may dwell in a Christendom which has been leavened, and so in a degree himself share in the universal leavening. But more than this is needed, and more than this in every elect soul will find place. There will be a personal appropriation of the benefit; and we have the history of this in these two parables\* which follow. They were spoken, not to the multitude, not to those "without," but in the house, and to the more immediate disciples. These are addressed as having lighted on the hid treasure, having found the pearl of price; and are now warned of the surpassing worth of these, and that, for their sakes, all things which would hinder them from making these securely their own, are to be joyfully renounced. The second parable does not merely repeat what the first has said, but repeats it with a difference. They are each the complement of the other: so that under one or other, as finders either of the pearl or of the hid treasure, may be ranged all who become partakers of the

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\* Origen (*Comm. in Matt*) observes that these would more fitly be called *similitudes* (ὁμοιώσεις) than parables, which name, he says, is not given to them in the Scripture: yet see ver. 53.—For a series of these briefer parables as in use among the Jews, see SCHÖETIGEN'S *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. pp. 83-85.

rich blessings of the Gospel of Christ. For these, it may be, are persons who feel that there must be some absolute good for man, in the possession of which he shall be blessed and find the satisfaction of all his longings, and who are, therefore, seeking everywhere and inquiring for this good. Such are likened to the merchant that has distinctly set before himself the purpose of seeking and obtaining goodly pearls. They are the fewer in number, but at the same time, perhaps, the noblest converts to the truth. Again, there are others, who do not discover that there is an aim and a purpose for man's life, or that there is a truth for him at all, until the truth as it is in Jesus is revealed to them. Such are likened to the finder of the hid treasure, who stumbled upon it unawares, neither expecting nor looking for it. While the others felt that there was a good, and were looking for it, the discovery of the good itself is the first thing that reveals to these that there is such at all; whose joy, therefore, as greater,—being the joy at the discovery of an unlooked-for treasure,—is expressed; that of the others, not. Thus Hammond, bringing out this distinction, paraphrases the two parables thus: "The Gospel being by some not looked after, is yet sometimes met with by them, and becomes matter of infinite joy and desire to them: and so is likened fitly to a treasure, which a man finding casually in a field, hid again, or concealed it, and then, designing to get into his possession, accounts no price he can pay too dear for it. Others there are which have followed the study of wisdom, and thirsted after some instruction: and then the Gospel of Christ comes as a rich prize doth to a merchant, which is in pursuit of rich merchandize, and meeting with a jewel for his turn, lays out all his estate upon it."

The cases of Jew and Gentile will respectively exemplify the contrast between the Pearl and the Hid Treasure; though, of course, in the case of the Jews, or the larger part of them, the illustration cannot be carried through, as they, though seeking the pearl, having a zeal for righteousness, yet, when the pearl of great price was offered to them, were not willing to "*sell all*," to renounce their peculiar privileges, their self-

righteousness, and all else which they held dear, that they might buy that pearl. The Gentiles, on the contrary, at least the greater number of them, came upon the treasure unawares. Christ was found of them that sought Him not, and the blessings of his truth revealed to them who before had not divined that there were such blessings for man.\* Or, again, we might instance Nathanael, as an example of the more receptive nature, of one who has the truth found for him; or a still more striking example,—the Samaritan woman (John iv.), who was thinking of anything rather than of lighting on the hid treasure, when she came to draw water from the well. Yet in this character there cannot be a total absence of a seeking for the truth; only it is a desire that has hitherto slumbered in the soul, and displays itself rather as a love of the truth when revealed, and at once a joyful and submissive acquiescence to it, than in any active previous quest. In both, there must be the same willingness to embrace it, when it is known, and to hold it fast at all costs and hazards. On the other hand, we have, perhaps, no such picture of a noble nature, seeking for the pearl of price, and not resting till he had found it, as that which Augustine gives of himself in his *Confessions*; though we also have many more, such as Justin Martyr's account of his own conversion, given in his first dialogue with Trypho, in which he tells how he had travelled

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\* Grotius: *Doctrina Evangelica quibusdam affulsit, neque de Deo, neque de vitâ emendandâ, neque de spe vitæ alterius quicquam cogitantibus, quales erant plerique in gentibus externis, quibus illud vaticinium Paulus aptat: Inventus sum non quærentibus me. Erant et sapientiæ studiosi inter Judæos et alibi, qui veritatibus cognoscendæ desiderio quodam tangebantur, quive Prophetam aliquem aut ipsum etiam Messiam avidis animis expectabant. Priores respicit thesauri comparatio, posteriores ista de unione. Bengel recognizes the same distinction: Inventio thesauri non præsupponit *quod* quærere, ut margaritæ, quæ per contationem inveniuntur. Alex. Knox (*Remains*, vol. i. p. 416, seq.) has very excellent remarks to the same effect. There is rather a confirmation of this in the forms which the two parables assume. In this the treasure is the prominent circumstance; "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure." Now if the other had been cast in the same mould, it would have been said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a pearl; but not so, it is "like unto a merchantman;" so that the person seeking is there at the centre of the spiritual picture, the thing found, here. This is scarcely accidental.*

through the whole circle of Greek philosophy, seeking everywhere for that which would satisfy the deepest needs of his soul, and ever seeking in vain, till he found it at length in the Gospel of Christ.

The circumstance which supplies the groundwork of this first parable, namely, the finding of a concealed treasure,\* must have been of much more frequent occurrence in an insecure state of society, such as in almost all ages has been that of the East, than happily it can be with us. A writer on Oriental literature and customs mentions that in the East, on account of the frequent changes of dynasties, and the revolutions which accompany them, many rich men divide their goods into three parts. one they employ in commerce, or for their necessary support; one they turn into jewels, which, should it prove needful to fly, could be easily carried with them; a third part they bury. But while they trust no one with the place where the treasure is buried, so is the same, should they not return to the spot before their death, as good as lost to the living (compare Jer. xli. 8), until, by chance, a lucky peasant, while he is digging his field, lights upon it.† And thus, when we read, in Eastern tales, how a man has found a buried treasure, and, in a moment, risen from poverty to great riches, this is, in fact, an occurrence that not unfrequently happens, and is a natural consequence of the customs of these people.‡ Modern books of travels continually bear witness to the universal belief in the existence of such hid treasures; so that the traveller often finds great difficulty in

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\* *Θησαυρός*, i. e. *συναγωγή χρημάτων κεκρυμμένη*, as an old Lexicon explains it. Neither of the derivations greatly commend themselves, not *πίθημι* and *αὔρον* (= aurum), the receptacle of gold, since the word *αὔρον* seems not so old as *θησαυρός* itself; and that from *τίθημι εἰς αὔρον*, that put by for tomorrow, is artificial.—The Jurisconsult Paulus gives its legal definition, *Thesaurus est tam vetus depositio pecuniæ, ut ejus non exstet memoria, et jam dominum non habeat.*

† Compare the *Aulularia* of Plautus, *Prolog.* 6-12.

‡ Richardson (*Dissert. on the Languages, &c., of Eastern Nations*, p. 180); quoted by Rosenmüller (*Alte und Neue Morgenland*, vol. v. p. 197). Compare the strange story told by Tacitus, *Annal.* xvi. 1-3.

obtaining information about antiquities, and is sometimes seriously inconvenienced, or even endangered, in his researches among ancient ruins, by the jealousy of the neighbouring inhabitants, who fear lest he is coming to carry away concealed hoards of wealth from among them, of which, by some means or other, he has got notice. And so also the skill of an Eastern magician in great part consists in being able to detect the places where these secreted treasures will successfully be looked for.\* Often, too, a man abandoning the regular pursuits of industry will devote himself to treasure-secking, in the hope of growing, through some happy chance, rich of a sudden† (Job iii. 21; Prov. ii. 4). The contrast, however, between the present parable and the following, noticed already, renders it unlikely that in the present we are to assume the finder to have been in search of the treasure; he rather stumbles upon it unawares,‡ probably while he is engaged as a hireling in cultivating the field of another.

Some, in the interpretation, draw a distinction between “*the field*” and “*the treasure*,” making the first to be the Holy Scriptures; the second, the hidden mystery of the knowledge of Christ contained in them,§ which when a man has partly perceived,—discovered, that is, and got a glimpse of the treasure,—he is willing to renounce all meaner aims and objects; that, having leisure to search more and more into

\* See BURDER'S *Oriental Literature*, vol. i. p. 275, and for evidence of the same in old time, BECKER'S *Charikles*, vol. i. p. 224.

† The reader of Plato will remember his noble words, *De Legg* i. 11, 913.

‡ Such a treasure in a field would naturally be most often found quite unexpectedly, as Horace: *O si urnam argenti fors qua mihi monstret*;—it would often be turned up by the husbandman engaged in digging or ploughing, and thinking of no such thing: *O si Sub rastro crepet argenti mihi seria!* (Persius).

§ So Jerome (*Comm in Matt* in loc): *Thesaurus iste, . . . sanctæ Scripturæ in quibus reposita est notitia Salvatoris*; and Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* i. qu. 18): *Thesaurum in agro absconditum, dixit duo Testamenta Legis in Ecclesiâ, quæ quis cum ex parte intellectus attigerit, sentit illic magna latere, et vadit et vendit omnia sua, et emit agrum illum, id est, contemptu temporalium comparat sibi otium, ut sit dives cognitione Dei.*

those Scriptures, to make them his own, he may become rich in the knowledge of Christ which therein is contained.\* Yet to me "*the field*" rather represents the outer visible Church, as contra-distinguished from the inward spiritual, with which "*the treasure*" would then agree. As the man who before looked on the field with careless eyes, prized it but as another field, now sees in it a new worth, determines now that nothing shall separate him from it, so he who recognizes the Church, not as a human institute, but a divine, as a dispenser, not of earthly gifts, but of heavenly,—who has learned that God is in the midst of it,—sees now that it is something different from, and something more than, all earthly societies, with which hitherto he has confounded it: and henceforth it is precious in his sight, even to its outermost skirts, for the sake of its inward glory which is revealed to his eyes. And he sees, too, that blessedness is unalterably linked to communion with it; as the man cannot have the treasure and leave the field, but both or neither must be his, so he cannot have Christ except in his Church; none but the golden pipes of the sanctuary are used for the conveyance of the golden oil (Zech. iv. 12); he cannot have Christ in his heart, and, at the same time, separate his fortunes from those of Christ's struggling, suffering, warring Church: the treasure and the field go together; both or neither must be his.

But not to anticipate the progress of the parable,—this treasure "*when a man hath found he hideth*;" having laid it open in the discovery, he covers it up again, while he goes and effects the purchase of the field. By these words it cannot, of course, be meant that he who has discovered the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in Christ Jesus, will desire to keep his knowledge to himself, since rather he will feel himself, as he never did before, a debtor to all men, to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery that is

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\* Origen's view in a striking passage, *De Prin.* iv. 23, namely, that "*the field*" is the letter, and "*the hid treasure*" the spiritual or allegorical meaning, underlying this letter, is only a modification of the same.

hid in Christ. He will go to his brother man, like Andrew to Peter, and saying to him, "We have found the Messias," will seek to bring him to Jesus. If he hide the treasure, this hiding will be, not lest another should find it, but lest he himself should lose it.\* In the first moments that the truth is revealed to a soul, there may well be a tremulous fear lest the blessing found should, by some means or other, escape from it again; the anxiety that it may not do so, the jealous precautions for this end taken, would seem to be the truth signified by this re-concealment of the treasure found.

Having thus secured it for the moment, the finder, "*for joy thereof* (or, *for his joy*), *goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*" the joy is expressly mentioned here, being that in the strength of which the finder of the spiritual treasure is enabled to part with everything besides;† no compulsion, no command is necessary; "*for joy thereof*" he cannot do otherwise; all other things have now no glory, "by reason of the glory which excelleth." Augustine excellently illustrates from his own experience this part of the parable. Describing the crisis of his own conversion, and how easy he found it, through this joy, to give up all those pleasures of sin that he had long dreaded to be obliged to renounce, which had long held him fast bound in the chains of evil custom; and which if he renounced, it had seemed to him as though life itself would not be worth the living, he exclaims: "How sweet did it at once become to me, to want the sweetnesses of those toys! and what I feared to be parted from was now a joy to part with. For thou didst cast them forth from me, thou true and highest sweetness. Thou castedst them forth, and, for

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\* Mal lonatus. Non ne alius inveniat, sed ne ipse perdat; Jerome (*Comm. in Matt* in loc). Non quod hoc de invidia faciat, sed quod timore servantis et nolentis perdere, abscondit in corde suo quem pristinis prætulit facultatibus. H. de Sto Victore differently (*De Arcâ Mor.* iii. 6): Thesaurum inventum manifestat, qui acceptum donum Sapientiæ in ostentatione portat. Thesaurum autem inventum abscondit, qui accepto dono Sapientiæ non foris in oculis hominum, sed intus coram Deo inde gloriari quærit.

† Bengel: Gaudium spirituale, stimulus abnegandi mundum.

them, enteredst in thyself, sweeter than all pleasure.”\* The parting with those other delights, which had hitherto held him bound, was, in Augustine’s case, the selling of all that he had, that he might buy the field. Compare Phil. iii. 4-11, where St. Paul declares how he too sold all that he had, renounced his trust in his own righteousness, in his spiritual and fleshly privileges, that he might “win Christ, and be found in him.” In each of these illustrious instances, the man parted with the dearest thing that he had, so to make the treasure his own: though, in each case, how different was the thing parted with! So, too, whenever any man renounces the thing that is closest to him, rather than that that should be a hindrance to his embracing and making his own all the blessings of the Gospel,—when the lover of money renounces his covetousness,—and the indolent man, his case,—and the lover of pleasure, his pleasure,—and the wise man, his confidence in the wisdom of this world, then each is selling what he has, that he may buy the field which contains the treasure. Yet is not this selling of all to be considered merely in the light of an arbitrary condition, imposed from without, but rather in that of a delightful constraint, acknowledged within: even as a man would willingly fling down pebbles and mosses, which hitherto he had been gathering, and with which he had filled his hands, if pearls and precious stones were offered him in their stead;† or as the dead leaves easily and as of themselves fall off from the tree, when propelled by the new blossoms and buds which are forcing their way from behind.

A difficulty has been sometimes found in the circumstance

\* *Confess ix 1*: Quam suave mihi subito factum est carere suavitatibus nugarum, et quas amittere metus fuerat, jam dimittere gaudium erat. Ejiciebas enim eas a me, vera tu et summa suavitas, ejiciebas et intrabas pro eis, omni voluptate dulcior.

† Augustine: Ecce petis a Deo, et dicis, Domine, da mihi. Quid tibi dabit, qui ahundo manus tuas videt occupatas? Ecce Dominus vult dare quæ sua sunt, et non videt, ubi ponat. And again (*in 1 Ep. Joh. Tract 4*): Bono implendus es, funde malum. Puta quia melle te vult implere Deus. Si aceto plenus es, ubi mel pones? Fundendum est quod portabat vas. Mundandum est, etsi cum labore, cum triturrâ: ut fiat aptum cuidam rei.



of the finder of the treasure going and buying the field,\* at the same time keeping back, as plainly he does, from the owner, the knowledge of the fact which enhanced its value so greatly that, had he known of it, either he would not have parted with it at all, or only at a much higher price. They argue that it is against the decorum of the divine teaching and of the Divine Teacher, that an action, morally questionable at least, if not absolutely unrighteous, should be used even for the outward setting forth of a spiritual action which is commended and urged upon others as worthy of imitation; that there is a certain approbation of the action conveyed, even in the very use of it for such ends; in fact, they find the same difficulty here as in the parables of the Unjust Steward, and the Unjust Judge. Olshausen,† so far from evading the difficulty, or seeking to rescue the present parable from underlying the same difficulty as undoubtedly cleaves to one of those, himself urges the likeness which exists between the two, and affirms that, in both, *prudence* (Klugheit) with regard to divine things is commended; so that they are parables of the same class, and in this respect, at least, containing the same moral. But to the objection made above, it seems enough to reply, that not every part of his conduct who found the treasure is proposed for imitation,‡ but only his earnestness in securing

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\* It is curious, and is noticed by Vitringa (*Erklar. d. Parab.* p. 235), that we should have, in ancient history, an account almost exactly answering to that which supplies the groundwork of the present parable. After the defeat of Mardonius at Plataea, a report existed that he had left great treasures buried within the circuit where his tent had stood; Polycrates, a Theban, buying the ground, sought long for the treasure, but not finding it, inquired at Delphi, and was told "to turn every stone," which doing, he found it. Such the proverb-collectors give as the origin of the proverb, πάντα λίθον κίνει (*Paræm. Græc.* Oxf. 1836, p. 363).

† In his *Biblischer Commentar*, a most interesting and instructive work, to which my obligations are large and frequent. It unhappily was left unfinished by his too early death; and is being completed by very inferior hands.

‡ Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps.* lvii. 6): Non undecunque datur similitudo a Scripturis, laudatur ipsa res, sed tantum inde similitudo trahitur.

the treasure found, his fixed purpose to make it, at all costs and all hazards, his own, and (which, I suppose, is Olshausen's meaning) his prudence, without any affirmation, that the actual manner in which that prudence was exercised, was praiseworthy or not.\*

\* In books of casuistry, where they treat of the question, how far and where a finder has a right to appropriate things found, this parable is frequently adduced, as by Aquinas (*Summ Theol.* ii. qu. 69, art. 5). *Circa res inventas est distinguendum. Quædam enim sunt, quæ nunquam fuerint in bonis alicujus, sicut lapilli et gemmæ quæ inveniuntur in litore maris. Et talia occupanti conceduntur, et eadem ratio est de thesauris antiquo tempore sub terrâ occultatis, quorum non exstat aliquis possessor: nisi quod secundum leges civiles tenetur inventor dare medietatem domino agri, si in alieno agro invenerit. Propter quod in parabolâ dicitur (*Matt* xiii), de inventore thesauri, quod emit agrum, quasi ut haberet jus possidendi totum thesaurum.*—We read of Apollonius of Tyana (see his *Life*, ii. 15) being called in to decide a quarrel between the buyer and seller of such a field, as to which of them a treasure found in it shall belong. He does not much help the law of the matter, for he adjudges it to whichever of the parties shall be found, on scrutiny, to have lived in time past the holiest life.

## PARABLE VI.

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### THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

MATTHEW XIII. 45, 46.

ALMOST all which might have needed to be said upon this parable, had it stood alone, has been anticipated in its twin parable, with which we just have been occupied. The relations in which the two stand to one another have been already noticed: we have not here as there merely a *finder*, but also a *seeker*, of true wisdom—"The kingdom of God is like unto a merchant man\* seeking goodly pearls." To find them has been the object of his labours: "the search is therefore determinate, discriminative, unremitting." He has set this purpose distinctly before him, and to it is bending all his energies; he is one in fact, who has felt that man was not made in vain, that there must be a centre of peace for him, a good that will satisfy all the cravings of his soul, and who is determined not to rest till he has found that good. He does not perhaps yet know that it is but *one*, for at his starting he is seeking *many* goodly pearls, but rather perhaps imagines that it is to be made up and combined from many quarters: but this also will be revealed to him in due time.†

It will make much for the beauty of the parable, and the fitness of the image used to set forth the surpassing value of the kingdom of God, that we keep in mind the esteem in

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\* The pearl-merchant was termed *margaritarius*, a name sometimes also given to the diver.

† Augustine (*Serm. de Disc. Christ.* vol. vi. p. 583, Bened. ed.) assumes the *oneness* of that which here is found as furnishing another point of contrast beside those already detailed, between this parable and the last. There the kingdom of heaven is presented as manifold, even as a treasure would contain precious things of various kinds laid up in it; here it is presented in its unity—as much as to say, This which is so multifold, is also single and at heart but one.

which pearls were held in antiquity,\* so that there is record of almost incredible sums having been given for single pearls, when perfect of their kind. There were many defects which materially diminished their value, as for instance, if they had a yellow or dusky tinge, or were not absolutely round or smooth. The skill and wariness which the pearl-merchant therefore needed, lest he should have a meaner thing imposed on him in place of the best, will not be without its answer in the spiritual world.† There are many pearls of an inferior quality,‡ but this merchant is seeking “*goodly*” pearls; as he whom the merchant represents, has set before himself, not mean and poor, but noble and worthy, aims; and this even in times anterior to that in which he finds the pearl of price. He is not one living for sensual objects. He has not made pleasure, or gain, or the high places of the world, the end and scope of his toils. But he has been, it may be, a philanthropist, a seeker of wisdom, a worshipper of the beautiful in nature or in art; one who has hoped to find his soul’s satisfaction in some one of these things. But this pearl of price which at length he finds, what is it? Many answers have been given, which yet, diverging as they may seem from one

\* Pliny: *Principium culmenque omnium rerum pretii margaritæ tenent*: and the word which was rendered (Prov. iii. 15, viii. 11; xx. 15, xxxi. 10; Job xxviii. 18) by earlier translators of Scripture most commonly as “rubies” (רִבְיָיִם) is generally believed now to signify pearls (Gr. *πίρρα*), though the question is still unsettled.

† Augustine (*Serm.* xxxvii. 8). *Discite lapides æstimare, negotiatores regni cœlorum.*

‡ Origen (*Comm. in Matt.* in loc.) has much curious learning about pearls. The theory of their formation current in ancient times is detailed by him. The fish conceived the pearl from the dew of heaven, and according to the quality of the dew, it was pure and round, or cloudy and deformed with specks (see PLINY, *H. N.* ix. 35; AMMIAN. MARCELLINUS, xxiii. 6, 85). The state of the atmosphere at the time of their conception, and even the hour of the day, were then naturally supposed to exercise a great influence on their size and colour. Thus Isidore Hisp.: *Meliores... candidæ margaritæ quam quæ flavescent: illas enim aut juvenus, aut matutini roris conceptio reddit candidas; has senectus vel vespertinus aër reddit obscuras.* See also Mr. GRESWELL’s *Exp. of the Par.* vol. ii. pp. 220-222; and BOCHART’s *Hierozoicon*, pars ii. 5, 5-8.

another, grow all out of one and the same root; all ultimately resolve themselves into one.\* Whether we say the pearl is the kingdom of God within a man,—or the knowledge of Christ,†—or Christ himself,‡—we do but in different ways express one and the same thing.

The merchant, having found this excellent pearl, “*went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*” What this selling implies, has been already seen; and to understand what the buying means, and what it does not mean, we may compare Isai. lv. 1; Matt. xxv. 9, 10; Rev. iii. 18; and Prov. xxiii. 23, “*Buy the truth, and sell it not;*” obtain the truth at any price, and let no price tempt you to part with it. The contrast between the *one* pearl which the merchant finds and the *many* which he had been seeking, is here by no means to be overlooked. The same contrast is marked elsewhere; Martha is troubled about *many* things; Mary has found that but *one* thing is needful (Luke x. 41, 42). There is but one such pearl (though every seeker may obtain that one), since the truth is one, even as God is one; and the truth possessed restores that unity into the heart of man, which sin had destroyed. The heart which through sin had become as a

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\* See SUICER's *Thes* s. v *μαργαρίτης*

† H. de Sto. Victore (*Annot in Matt*). Bonæ margaritæ, lex et prophetæ: una pretiosa, Salvatoris scientia. And Origen on this place has these instructive references, Matt xvii. 5-8; 2 Cor. iii. 10. Schoettgen observes (*Hor. Heb.* vol. i p 132): Judæi doctrinas et lectiones pulchras ac notatu dignas vocarunt margaritas:—as in later Latin, margaritum was a name of endearment, Von Bohlen (*Das All Ind* vol ii p 122) derives margarita from a Sanscrit word manâsaritâ, signifying The pure. Another name it bore signified The beloved.

‡ Theophylact says, that it was at a moment when it lightened that the conception of the pearl from the heavenly dew took place; which explains an otherwise obscure passage in Clemens of Alexandria (Potter's ed. p. 1014), when, explaining this parable, he says, “This Pearl is the most pellucid and pure Jesus, whom the Virgin conceived from the divine lightning.” Augustine, too (*Quæst. ex Matt.* qu. 13), likens Christ to the pearl, though he does not bring out this point of comparison: Est enim Verbum Domini lucidum, candore veritatis, et solidum firmitate æternitatis, et undique sui simile pulcritudine divinitatis, qui Deus penetratâ carnis testudine intelligendus est. Bochart (*Hieroicoon*, pars ii. 5, 8, in fine) has a graceful bringing out of the points of likeness between the kingdom of God and a pearl.

mirror shattered into a thousand fragments, and every fragment reflected some different object, is now reunited again, and the whole with more or less clearness reflects, as it was intended at first to do, the one image of God. It is God alone in whom any intelligent creature can find its centre and true repose; only when man has found *Him*, does the great *Eureka* burst forth from his lips; in Augustine's beautiful and often-quoted words, "Lord, Thou hast made us *for* Thee, and our heart is disquieted till it resteth *in* Thee."\*

Before concluding the notice of this parable, it may be worth while to notice an interpretation which strangely reverses the whole matter. The Merchant seeking goodly pearls is now Christ himself. The Church of the elect is the pearl of price; which that He might purchase and make his own, He parted with all that He had, emptying himself of his divine glory, and taking the form of a servant.† Or yet more ingeniously, the pearl, as in the common explanation, is the kingdom of heaven; but Christ the merchant, who to secure that kingdom to us and make it ours, though He was so rich, gladly made himself poor, buying that pearl and that treasure,—not indeed for himself, but for us.‡

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\* *Fecisti nos propter te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te*

† Salmeron (*Serm. in Par. Evang* p. 66) applies the same to the parable preceding: *Homo qui invenit thesaurum, hoc est, pretiosam Ecclesiam electorum . . . Christus est, qui pro comparando tanto sanctorum thesauro omnia bona sua distinxit* Compare the *Brief Exposition of Matth. xiii* by J. N. DARBY, pp. 30, 31.

‡ So Drexelius (*Opp.* vol. i. p. 209): *Quis venior Christo Domino mercator, qui pretium sui sanguinis infinitum pro pretiosis illis mercibus dedit? Vere abiit, vendiditque omnia, famam, sanguinem, vitam exposuit, ut nobis cælum emeret* Compare the *Theol. Studien und Kritiken*, 1846, pp. 939-946

## PARABLE VII.

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### *THE DRAW-NET.*

MATTHEW xiii. 47-50.

THIS parable would at first sight seem to say exactly the same thing as that of the Tares. Maldonatus, ascribing absolute identity of purpose to the two, supposes the parables of this chapter not to be related in the order wherein the Lord spoke them, but that this immediately followed upon that. Here, however, he is clearly mistaken; there is this fundamental difference between them, that the central truth of that is the *present* intermixture of the good and bad; of this, the *future* separation; of that, that men are not to effect the separation; of this, that the separation will, one day, by God be effected; so that the order in which we have them is evidently the right one, as that is concerning the gradual development, this, the final consummation, of the Church. Olshausen draws a further distinction between the two; in that the kingdom of God is represented rather in its idea, as identical with the whole world, which idea it shall ultimately realize; in this, rather in its present imperfect form, as a less contained in a greater, which yet, indeed, has this tendency in itself, to spread over and embrace all that greater; —“*the sea*” being here the world, and “*the net*” the Church, which gathers in its members from the world, as the net does its fish from the sea.

With all this, the parables resemble one another so nearly, that much which has been already said, in considering the other, will apply to this. The same use has been made of either parable; there is the same continual appeal to this as to that in the Donatist controversy; and both convey to all ages the same lesson, namely, that the Lord did not con-

template his visible Church as a communion in which there should be no intermixture of evil ; but as there was a Ham in the ark, and a Judas among the twelve, so there should be a Babylon even within the bosom of the spiritual Israel ; Esau shall contend with Jacob even in the Church's womb,\* till, like another Rebekah, she shall often have to exclaim, " Why am I thus ? " (Gen. xxv. 22). They convey, too, the same further lesson, that this fact does not justify self-willed departure from the fellowship of the Church, and impatient leaping over, or breaking through, the nets, as here it has often been called ; but the Lord's separation is patiently to be waited for, which shall surely arrive at the end of the present age.†

\* See Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* cxxvi. 3.

† The following extracts will show the uses, either practical or controversial, to which the parable was turned. Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps* lxi v 6) : Jam in mari capti per retia fidei, gaudeamus nos ibi natari adhuc intra retia, quia adhuc mare hoc sævit procellis, sed retia quæ nos ceperunt perducentur ad litus. Interim intra ipsa retia, fratres, bene vivamus, non retia rumpentes foras exeamus. Multi enim ruperunt retia et schismata fecerunt et foias exierunt. Quia malos pisces intra retia captos tolerare se nolle dixerunt, ipsi mali facti sunt potius, quam illi quos se non potuisse tolerare dixerunt—The curious ballad verses which are found at the commencement of his *Anti-Donatist Tracts*, and which he wrote, as he says, to bring the subject within the comprehension of the most unlearned, begin with a reference to, and exposition of, this parable.

Abundantia peccatorum solet fratres conturbare ;  
Propter hoc Dominus noster voluit nos præmonere,  
Comparans regnum cælorum reticulo misso in mare,  
Congreganti multos pisces, omne genus hinc et inde,  
Quos cum traxissent ad litus, tunc ceperunt separare,  
Bonos in vasa miserunt, reliquos malos in mare.  
Quisquis recohit Evangelium, recognoscat cum timore  
Videt reticulum Ecclesiam, videt hoc seculum mare,  
Genus autem mixtum piscis, justus est cum peccatore :  
Seculi finis est litus, tunc est tempus separare :  
Quando retia ruperunt, multum dilexerunt mare.  
Vasa sunt sedes sanctorum, quo non possunt pervenire.

The following quotations from the minutes of the conference at Carthage will show how the Donatists sought to evade the force of the arguments drawn from this parable, and how the Catholics replied. Those did not deny that Christ spake in this parable of sinners being found mingled with the righteous in the Church upon earth, yet it was only *concealed* sinners ; they affirmed (*Coll. Carth.* d. 3), hoc de reis



It is worth our while to consider what manner of net it is to which our Lord likens the kingdom of heaven. In the heading of the chapter in our Bibles, it is called a *draw-net*, and the particular kind is distinctly specified by the word in the original.\* The seinc or sean, for the Greek word has

*latentibus* dictum, quoniam reticulum in mari positum quid habeat, a piscatoribus, id est a sacerdotibus, ignoratur, donec extractum ad litus ad purgationem boni seu mali prodantur. Ita et latentes et in Ecclesiâ constituti, et a sacerdotibus ignorati, in divino iudicio proditi, tanquam pisces mali a sanctorum consortio separantur. Augustine answers, with an allusion to Matt. iii. 12 (*Ad Don. post Coll* 10): Numquid et area sub aquâ vel terrâ tritatur, aut certe nocturnis horis, non in sole, continentur, aut in eâ rusticus cæcus operatur?—It is evident that their reply was a mere evasion; that they took refuge in an accidental circumstance in the parable, namely, that so long as the nets are under water their contents cannot be seen, so to avoid being plainly convinced of schism

\* *Σαγήνη* (not, as some derive it, from *ἔσω ἄγειν*, but from *σάπρω*, onero), a *hauling* net, as distinguished from the *ἀμφίβληστρον* or *casting* net (Matt iv 18); in Latin, *tragum*, *tragula*, *veniculum*. It was of immense length; *vasta* sagena, Manilius calls it, and is spoken of as nearly taking in the compass of an entire bay. On the coast of Cornwall, where the sean is well known, it is sometimes half a mile long. It is leaded below, that it may sweep the bottom of the sea, and supported with corks above, and having been carried out so as to enclose a large space of sea, the ends are then brought together, and it is drawn up upon the beach with all that it contains. Cicero calls Verres, with a play upon his name, *crerriculum* in provinciâ, in that he swept all before him; and in the Greek Fathers we have *θανάτου σαγήνη*, *κατακλυσμοῦ σαγήνη* (see SUICER's *Thes* s. v.); in each case with allusion to the all-embracing nature of this net, which allowed no escape. See Hab i. 15-17, lxx., where the mighty reach of the Chaldean conquests is set forth under this image, and by this word. In this view of it, as an *ἀπέραντον δίκτυον* "Ατης, how grand is the comparison in Homer (*Odyss.* xxii 384) of the slaughtered suitors, whom Ulysses saw,

ὥστ' ἰχθύας, οὐσθ' ἀλιῆς  
κοῖλον ἐς αἰγιαλὸν πολιῆς ἔκτοσ' εὖ θαλάσσης  
δικτύῳ ἐξέρυσαν πολυωπῶ. οἱ δέ τε πάντες,  
κύμαθ' ἄλός ποθέοντες, ἐπὶ ψαμάθοισι κέχυνται.

There are curious notices in Herodotus (iii 149, vi 31) of the manner in which the Persians swept away the conquered population from some of the Greek islands; a chain of men, holding hand in hand and stretching across the whole island, advanced over its entire length, thus taking, as it were, the entire population in a draw-net; and to this process the technical word *σαγηρεύειν* was applied. Cf. PLATO's *Menexenus* (p. 42, Stallbaum's ed.), where the process is described; *De Legg.* iii. p. 698; and PLUTARCH, *De Solert. Animal.* 26. There is a good account of the *σαγήνη* in the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. Rete, p. 823.

been naturalized in English, reaching us through the Vulgate and Anglo-Saxon, is a net of the largest size, suffering nothing to escape from it; and this its all-embracing nature is certainly not to be left out of sight, as an accidental or unimportant circumstance, but contains in fact a prophecy of the wide reach and effectual inclusion of the Gospel. The kingdom of heaven should henceforward be a net, not cast into a single stream as hitherto, but into the broad sea of the whole world, and gathering some "*of every kind*," some out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Or by this "*every kind*" we may understand both good and bad; that, as the servants who invited the guests to the marriage supper (Matt. xxii. 10), "gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good;" so here the same, but now as fishers, take fish of all kinds within the folds of their net; men of every diversity of moral character having the Gospel preached to them, and finding themselves within the limits of the visible Church.\*

But as all do not use the advantages which the communion of the Church has afforded them, an ultimate separation is necessary; the net, "*when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away*." Whether these "*bad*"† are dead putrid fish, such as

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\* Beza, indeed, translates ἐκ παντός γένους, ex omni rerum genere, as mud, shells, sea-weed, and whatever else of worthless would be gathered together within the folds of a net, these being the σαπρά, which are described in the next verse as cast away; and so in the Geneva version, "of all kinds of things." But the tendency of the parable would seem to determine that it is *fish* of all kinds (as the Vulgate, ex omni genere piscium), and not *things* of all kinds, which are spoken of; in the words of H. de Sto. Victore (*Annot. in Matt*): Congregat ex omnibus qui minoribus vel majoribus peccatis sunt a Deo divisi, et per multas iniquitates dispersi. Another name of the net, πᾶνταρον, is exactly derived from this collecting of all sorts of prey within its folds

† Σαπρά, scil. ἰχθύδια Grotius: Sunt nugamenta et quisquilie piscium, quod genus ut servatu indignum, videmus a piscatoribus abjici (ἄβρωτα καὶ ἄριμα, Lucian: pisces frivolos, Apuleius). Yet Vi-tringa, in an instructive note (*Erklar. d. Parab.* p. 344, seq.), refers to Athenæus as using σαπροὶ ἰχθύες in opposition to πρόσφατοι. As these are the fresh, those must be the stale, or here yet more strongly, putrid

sometimes are enclosed within a net and brought to land, or fish worthless and good for nothing, "that which was sick and unwholesome at the season," or such as from their kind, from their smallness, or some other cause, are unfit to be either sold or eaten, and are therefore flung carelessly aside, to rot upon the beach, and to become food for the birds of prey (Ezek. xxxii. 3, 4), there is often a question; and it seems not easy, as it is not very important, to decide. The interpretation is easy. When the number of God's elect is accomplished, then the separation of the precious from the vile, of the just from the unjust, shall follow. The nature of this separation—that it will be with full consideration—no hasty work confusedly huddled over—may be indicated in the *sitting down* of the fishers for the task of sorting and separating the good from the bad.\* From some image like that which our parable supplies, the "leaving" and "taking" of Matt. xxiv. 41, 42, "the one shall be taken, the other left,"

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(σαπρὸς, ὁ σεσηπῶς, *Etyrn. Mag*), and he denies that we should depart from this, the primary signification of the word, to take up with the secondary. But on the other hand, to find dead fish in a net, though it will sometimes happen, must be of a rare occurrence; and of the list of fishes which, for instance, Ovid gives in his fragment of the *Halieuticon*, how many, though perfectly fresh, would be flung aside as not edible, as worthless or noxious, the immunda chloris, merito vilissima salpa, . . . Et nigrum niveo portans in corpore virus Loligo, durique sues; or again,—Et capitis duro nociturus scorpius ictu,—all which might well have been gathered in this *σαγήνη*. We have proof that at times some of them were, from a proverb in the *Paræm. Græci* (Oxf. 1836, p. 14), which is explained as containing allusion to a fisherman who had got such a sea-scorpion in his net, by which he was stung, while carelessly handling its contents. Moreover, with Jewish fishermen, this rejection of part of the contents would of necessity find place, not because some of the fish were dead, but because they were unclean; "all that have not fins and scales shall be an abomination unto you" (Lev. xi. 9-12). These probably were the *σαπρά*. Fritzsche combines both meanings, for he explains it inutiles et putridos. Our translation, using the word "*bad*," has not determined absolutely for one sense or the other. See SUICER'S *Thez.* s. v.

\* Thus Bengel, who to this *καθίσαντες* appends *Studiosæ*; cf. Luke xiv. 28, 31; xvi. 6. At the same time it completes the natural picture:

in illo

Cespite consedi, dum lina madentia sicco,  
Utque recensere captivos ordine pisces.

OVID.

is most probably to be explained. Probably there as here the *taking* is for blessedness, the selecting of the precious; the *leaving* for destruction, the rejecting of the vile. The terms have sometimes been understood in exactly the opposite sense; yet hardly with justice; for what is the "*left*" but the refused, and the *refused* but the *refuse*?

These dead or worthless fish are "*cast away*." An entire freedom from all evil belongs to the idea of the Church, and this idea shall be ultimately realized. Notwithstanding all that mars its purity and defiles its brightness, we confess our belief in a *holy* Catholic Church; for we believe that whatever we see cleaving to it, which is not holy, is an alien disturbing element, to be one day perfectly separated from it. As all the prophets fore-announce such a glorious consummation, so in Revelations it is contemplated as at last accomplished: "*without* are dogs" (Rev. xxii. 15); the Church in that passage and this, as in so many others, being contemplated as a holy enclosure,\* into which nothing unclean has a right to enter; and from which, if it has by stealth or force effected an entrance, it shall sooner or later be expelled; even as those ceremonially unclean, in witness of this, were obliged to remain for a season without the camp, which was the figure of the kingdom of heaven. Christ, himself interpreting this parable, yet offers no explanation of the "*vessels*" into which the good fish are gathered; nor, indeed, is any needed: what the "*barn*" was at ver. 30, the "*vessels*" are here; the "*many mansions*" (John xiv. 2) which the Lord went to prepare for

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\* From this image is to be explained the frequent use of the terms *ἔξω* and (as here) *ἐκβάλλειν ἔξω*. The Church is regarded as complete in itself, with the line of its separation from the sinful *κόσμος* distinctly drawn. All non-christians then are those "*that are without*" (*οἱ ἔξω*, Mark iv. 11; Col. iv. 5); Christ will in nowise *cast out* (*οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω*), that is, expel from this holy enclosure, this city of refuge, those that come to him (John vi. 37). The prince of this world shall be *cast out* (John xii. 31), driven forth from God's redeemed creation. He that abideth not in Christ, is cast forth, or *cast out*, as a branch (John xv. 6),—the image continuing the same; as the dead vine-branches are flung forth from the vineyard and a riddance made of them, so will these be expelled from the kingdom of God.

his people, the "everlasting habitations" (Luke xvi. 9) into which He promises to receive them,\* the "city which hath foundations," that Abraham looked for (Heb. xi. 10).

But to whom is the task of separation to be confided? Here I cannot consent to Olshausen's view, which is also Vitranga's,† that those who draw the net, and those who discriminate between its contents, being, in the parable, the same; therefore, since the first are evidently the Apostles and their successors, now become, according to the Lord's promise, "fishers of men" (Matt. iv. 19; Luke v. 10; Ezek. xlvii. 10; Jer. xvi. 16†); so also the last must be—not the angelic ministers of God's judgments, but the same *messengers* of the Covenant, and as such, "*angels*" (ver. 49), to whom, being equipped with divine power, the task of judging and sundering should be committed. No doubt the Church, in its progressive development, is always thus judging and separating (1 Cor. v. 4, 5; Jude 22, 23); putting away one and another from her communion, as they openly declare themselves unworthy of it. But she does not count that she has thus cleansed herself, or that this perfect cleansing can be effected by any power which now she possesses. There must be a final judgment and sundering, not any more from within, but from without and from above; and of this decisive crisis we find everywhere else in Scripture the angels of heaven distinctly named as the instruments (Matt. xiii. 41; xxiv. 31; xxv.

\* Augustine (*Serm.* cccxviii 3): *Vacula sunt sanctorum sedes, et beatæ vitæ magna secreta.*

† *Erklar. d. Parab* p 351, seq.

‡ This last reference to Jer. xvi 16 will only hold good, supposing we connect this verse not with what follows, but, as Jerome does, with what goes before, and so make it not a threat, but a promise that into whatever place the Lord's people have been scattered, from thence He will be at all pains to recover them. In that fine Orphic hymn attributed to Clement of Alexandria (p. 312, Potter's ed.), Christ himself is addressed as the chief Fisher; and, as here, the world is the great sea of wickedness, out of which the saved, the holy fish, are drawn:

Ἄλιεῦ μερόπων  
τῶν σωζομένων,  
πελάγους κακίας

ἰχθῦς ἀγνοῦς  
κύματος ἐχθροῦ  
γλυκερῇ ζωῇ δελεάζων.

31; Rev. xiv. 18, 19).\* It seems then contrary to the analogy of faith to interpret the present passage in any other manner.

It is quite true, that in the familiar occurrence which supplies the groundwork of the parable, the same who carried out the net would naturally also draw it to shore, and thus they too would naturally be those who would inspect its contents, for the purpose of selecting the good and casting the worthless away; but it is pushing this circumstance, which, in fact, is the weak side of the comparison, too far, to require that the same should also hold good in the spiritual thing signified. In the nearly allied parable of the Tares, there was no improbability in supposing those who watched the growth of the crop to be different from those who finally gathered it in; and, accordingly, such a difference is marked: those are the "servants," these are the "reapers." The difference could not be marked in the same way here, but it is indicated, though lightly, in another way. The fishers are not once mentioned by name; the imperfection of the human illustration to set forth the divine truth is kept, as far as may be, out of sight, by the whole circumstance being told, as nearly as possible, impersonally. And when the Lord himself interprets the parable, He passes over, without a word, the beginning of it; thus, again, drawing away attention from a circumstance, upon which to dwell might needlessly have perplexed his hearers;—and He explains only the latter part, where the point and stress of it lay: "*So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire.*"† Assuming, then, as

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\* Moreover in each of the other parables of judgment, there is a marked distinction, which it is little likely should have been here renounced, between the present ministers of the kingdom, and the future executors of doom; in the Tares between the "servants" and the "reapers"—in the Marriage of the King's Son (Matt. xxii. 3, 13) between the "servants" (δούλοι) and "attendants" (διάκονοι), though our translation has lost it—in the Pounds between the "servants" and "those that stand by" (οἱ παρεστῶτες, Luke xix. 25).

† Chrysostom calls it with reference to this verse, φοβερὰν παραβολήν; and Gregory the Great (*Hom. 11, in Evang.*), Timendum est potius quam exponendum.

we may, and indeed must, the angels of heaven here also to be the takers and the leavers, we may recognize an emphasis in the "*coming forth*" attributed to them. Ever since the first constitution of the Church they have been hidden—withdrawn from men's sight for so long. But then, at that great epoch of the kingdom, they shall again "*come forth*" from before the throne and presence of God, and walk up and down among men, the visible ministers of his judgments.

Though the parable, as has been observed already, at first sight appears merely to teach over again the same truth as that of the Tares, yet the moral of it, in fact, is very different. It is needless to re-state the purpose of that; but the moral of this is clearly, that we be not content with being enclosed within the Gospel-net, that "they are not all Israel, who are of Israel;" but that, in the "great house" of the Church, "there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but of wood and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour;" that each of us therefore seek to be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use" (2 Tim. ii. 20, 21); since in the midst of all the confusions of the visible Church, "the Lord knoweth them that are his," and will one day bring these confusions to an end, separating, and for ever, the precious from the vile, the true kernel of humanity from the husk in which for a while it was enveloped.

The conclusion of these seven parables offers a fit opportunity for saying a few words on their relation to one another, which some have imagined to be very close, supposing them to be knit together by bands of the most intimate union. The mystical number seven has offered to many interpreters a temptation too strong to be resisted for the seeking of some hidden mystery here; and when the seven petitions of the Lord's prayer, and the names of the seven original deacons (Acts vi. 5), have been turned into prophecy of seven successive states of the Church, not to speak of the seven Apocalyptic Epistles (Rev. ii. iii.), it was scarcely to be expected that these seven parables should escape being made prophetic

of the same. They have, in fact, so often been dealt with as prophecy, that a late ingenious writer\* needed not to apologize for an attempt in this kind, as though it were something altogether novel and unheard of. "It is," he says, "my persuasion that the parables in this chapter are not to be considered disjointedly, but to be taken together as a connected series, indicating, progressively, the several stages of advancement through which the mystical kingdom of Christ, upon earth, was to proceed, from its commencement to its consummation. . . . It will be understood, then, that each parable has a period peculiarly its own, in which the state of things, so signified, predominates; but when another state of things commences, the former does not cease. It only becomes less prominent; operative as really as ever, but in a way subsidiary to that which now takes the lead. It will follow that each succeeding stage implies a virtual combination of all that has gone before, and of course the grand concluding scene will contain the sublimated spirit and extracted essence of the whole." Bengel had announced the same theory,† referring the first parable to the times of Christ and his immediate Apostles, when was the original sowing of the word of eternal life. The second, that of the Tares, belongs to the age immediately following, when watchfulness against false doctrine began to diminish, and heresies to creep in. The third, that of the Mustard-Seed, to the time of Constantine, when the Church, instead of even seeming to need support, evidently gave it, and the great ones of the earth came under its shadow and protection. The fourth, that of the Leaven, sets forth the diffusion of true religion through the whole world. The fifth, of the Hid Treas-

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\* Alex. Knox, in his *Remains*, vol. i. p. 408.

† *Præter communes et perpetuas regni cælorum sive Ecclesiæ rationes, conveniunt hæ septem parabolæ, reconditissimum habentes sensum, etiam in periodos et ætates Ecclesiæ diversas, ita quidem ut alia post aliam in complemento incipiat, non tamen prior quælibet ante initium sequentis exeat.* An essay by REUSS: *Meletema de sensu septem Parab. Matth. xiii. prophetico*, Jenæ, 1734, is the exposition of the same theory.



sure, to the more hidden state of the Church, signified in the Apocalypse (xii. 6) by the woman flying into the wilderness. The sixth, that of the Pearl, to the glorious time when the kingdom shall be esteemed above all things, Satan being bound. The seventh, of the Draw-Net, details the ultimate confusion, separation, and judgment.

Now doubtless the seven *have* a certain unity, succeeding one another in natural order, and possessing a completeness in themselves; yet it is rather the ideas and the laws than ~~the~~ actual facts of the Church's history which they declare. Thus in the Sower are set forth the causes of the failures and success which the word of the Gospel meets, when it is preached in the world. In the Tares, the obstacles to the internal development of Christ's kingdom, even after a Church has been hedged in and fenced round from the world, are declared and are traced up to their true Author, with a warning against the manner in which men might be tempted to remove those obstacles. The Mustard-Seed and the Leaven declare the victorious might,—the first, the outward, and the second, the inward might of that kingdom; and therefore implicitly prophesy of its development in spite of all these obstacles, and its triumph over them. As these two are objective and general, so the two which follow are subjective and individual, declaring the relation of the kingdom to every man, its supreme worth, and how those who have discovered that worth will be willing to renounce all things for its sake; they have besides mutual relations already touched on, and complete one another. This last is the declaration, how that entire separation from evil, which in the second we saw that men might be tempted to anticipate by unpermitted means, shall yet come to pass,—that separation which it is righteous to long for in God's own time, but wrong by self-willed efforts prematurely to anticipate;—and looking forward to which, each is to strive that he may so use the present privileges and means of grace which the communion of the Church affords him, that he may be found among those that shall be the Lord's, when He shall put away all the ungodly like dross,

when He shall set a difference between them who serve Him, and them who serve Him not.\*

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\* In this sense Marckius, who (*Syll. Diss. Exerc. 4*) sets himself against the caprice of the more distinctly historico-prophetic exposition, allows them prophetic. He thus traces their order and connexion: Plantanda erat Ecclesia per Evangelii prædicationem, apud multos tamen futuram inutilem; immiscendi per Satanæ astutam malitiam erant multi ad eam vere non pertinentes, et hinc aliquando ab eâ segregandi; ab in'tis parvis erat illa tamen surrectura in magnitudinem summam, et hinc progressura ad complexum omnium electorum; habitura illa erat verum summumque in sinu suo conclusum bonum; propter quod præ aliis appeteretur merito; quod cum præi'eis præstantissimis quibusvis excelleret, cum omnium aliorum perditione quærendum erat ab electis; et cujus neutiquam omnes erant futuri participes, qui hic in externam Ecclesiæ communionem essent allecti quidem, sed tamen ex eâ ejiciendi in perditionem Quo pacto hæ parabolæ respectu præcipui scopi sui non difficulter inter se connectuntur.

## PARABLE VIII.

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### THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT.

MATTHEW xviii 23-35.

THERE is nothing in the discourse going before, to lead immediately to Peter's question, in answer to which this parable was spoken; while, at the same time, the words, "*Then came Peter,*" seem to mark that a connexion exists. It may perhaps be thus traced: Peter must have felt in his Lord's injunction concerning the manner of dealing with an offending brother (ver. 15-17), that the forgiveness of his fault was necessarily implied as having already taken place; since, till we had forgiven, we could not be in the condition to deal with him thus; for this dealing, even to the exclusion of him from Church-fellowship, is entirely a dealing in love (2 Thess. iii. 14, 15), and with a view to his recovery (Ecclus. xix. 13-17). Nor does it mean, as we might be too much inclined to understand it, that after the failure of these repeated attempts to win him to a better mind, we should even then be justified in feeling strangeness towards him in our hearts;\* for compare the whole course of St. Paul's injunctions concerning the offender in the Corinthian church. Moreover, were that the meaning, the exercise of the law of love would then be limited to three times (see ver. 15-17); and that, in contradiction to what immediately follows, where

\* As neither, on the other hand, does the command to forgive till seventy times seven exclude a dealing, if need be, of severity, provided always it be a dealing in love. Thus Augustine (*Serm.* lxxxiii. 7): Si per caritatem imponitur disciplina, de corde lenitas non recedat. Quid enim tam pium quam medicus ferens ferramentum? Plorat secandus, et secatur; plorat urendus, et uritur. Non est illa crudelitas, absit ut sævitia medici dicatur. Sævitur in vulnus, ut homo sanetur, quia si vulnus palpetur, homo perditur. Cf. *Serm.* cccxi.

it is extended to seventy times seven.\* Chrysostom observes, that Peter instancing seven as the number of times that an offending brother should be forgiven, accounted certainly that he was doing some great thing, that his charity was taking a large stretch, these seven being four times more than the Jewish masters enjoined.† He increased the number of times with the feeling, no doubt, that the spirit of the new law of love which Christ had brought into the world,—a law larger, freer, more long-suffering, than the old,—required this.‡ There was then in Peter's mind a consciousness of this new law of love,—though an obscure one; for else he would not have supposed it possible that love could ever be overcome by hate, good by evil. But there was, at the same time, a fundamental error in the question itself, for in proposing a limit beyond which forgiveness should not extend, there was evidently implied the notion, that a man in forgiving, gave up a right which he might, under certain circumstances, exercise. The purpose of our Lord's answer, that is, of the parable, is

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\* Our Lord's "seventy times seven" of forgiveness makes a wonderful contrast, which has not escaped the notice of St. Jerome (vol. ii. p. 565, edit. Bened.), to Laméchi's, the antediluvian Antichrist's, seventy and seven-fold of revenge (Gen. iv. 24)—'Εβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ is not, as Origen and some others understand it,  $70+7=77$ , for that would be rather ἑβδομήκοντα ἑπτάκις, but  $70 \times 7=490$ .

† They grounded the duty of forgiving three times and not more, on Amos i. 8, ii. 6; also on Job xxxiii. 29, 30; at this last passage see the marginal translation (LIGHTFOOT'S *Hor. Heb.* in loc.).

‡ While this is true, there were yet deeper motives for his selection of the number seven. It is the number in the divine law with which the idea of remission (ἄφεσις) was ever linked. The seven times seventh year was the year of jubilee (ἔτος τῆς ἀφέσεως), Lev. xxv. 28, cf. iv. 6, 17; xvi. 14, 15. It is true that we find it as the number of punishment or retribution for evil also (Gen. iv. 15; Lev. xxvi. 18, 21, 24, 28; Deut. xxviii. 25; Ps. lxxix. 12; Prov. vi. 31; Dan. iv. 16; Rev. xv. 1); yet this should not disturb or perplex, rather confirm us in this view, since there lies ever in punishment the idea of restoration of disturbed relations, and so of forgiveness (Ezek. xvi. 42). Punishment is as the storm which violently restores the disturbed equilibrium of the moral atmosphere. Gregory of Nyssa then has a true insight into the reason why Peter should have named *seven* times, when he observes (*Opp.* vol. i. p. 159): Παρετήρησεν ὁ Πέτρος, ὅτι κανὼν παραδόσεως ἀρχαῖός ἐστι, τὸν ἑβδομάδα ἔμφασιν ἔχειν τινος ἀφέσεως ἀμαρτημάτων, ἀναπαύσεως τελείας, οὐ σημεῖον τὸ σαββατόν ἐστιν, ἡ ἑβδόμη ἡμέρα ἀπὸ γενέσεως.

to make clear that when God calls on a member of his kingdom to forgive, He does not call on him to renounce a right, but that he has now no right to exercise in the matter; for having himself asked for and accepted forgiveness, he has implicitly pledged himself to show it; and it is difficult to imagine how any amount of didactic instruction could have conveyed this truth with at all the force and conviction of the following parable.

"Therefore," to the end that you may understand what I say the better, "*is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.*" This is the first of the parables in which God appears in his character of King. We are the servants with whom He takes account. Yet this is not, as is plain, the *final* reckoning, not therefore identical with that of Matt. xxv. 19; 2 Cor. v. 10; but rather such a reckoning as that of Luke xvi. 2. To this He brings us by the preaching of the law,—by the setting of our sins before our face,—by awakening and alarming our conscience that was asleep before,—by bringing us into adversities,—by casting us into perils of death, so that there is not a step between us and it (2 Kin. xx. 4); He takes account with us, when He makes us feel that we could not answer Him one thing in a thousand, that our trespasses are more than the hairs of our heads; when through one mean or another He brings our careless carnal security to an utter end (Ps. l. 21). Thus David was summoned before God by the word of Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. xii.); thus the Ninevites by the preaching of Jonah; thus the Jews by John the Baptist.

"*And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents;*" he had not to go far, before he lighted on this one; he had only "*begun to reckon.*" This perhaps was the first into whose accounts he looked; there may have been others with yet larger debts behind. This one "*was brought unto him,*" for he never would have come of himself; far more probably he would have made that ten into twenty thousand; for the secure sinner

goes on treasuring up an ever mightier sum, to be one day required of him (Rom. ii. 5). The sum here is immense, whatever talents we suppose these to have been, though it would differ very much in amount, according to the talent which we assumed; if, indeed, the Hebrew, it would then be a sum perfectly enormous;\* yet only therefore the fitter to express the greatness of every man's transgression in thought, word, and deed, against his God.

In the case before us, the immensity of the sum may be best explained by supposing the defaulter to have been one of the chief servants of the king, a farmer or administrator of the royal revenues;† or, seeing that in the despotisms of the East, every individual, from the highest to the lowest, stands in an absolutely servile relation to the monarch, is in fact his "servant" or slave, there is nothing in that name to hinder us from supposing him to be one, to whom some chief post of honour and dignity in the kingdom had been committed,—a satrap who should have remitted the revenues of his province to the royal treasury.‡ This is far more probable than that he

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\* How great a sum it was, we can most vividly realize to ourselves by comparing it with other sums of which mention is made in Scripture. In the construction of the tabernacle twenty-nine talents of gold were used (Exod xxxviii 24), David prepared for the temple three thousand talents of gold, and the princes five thousand (1 Chron. xix 4-7); the queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, as a royal gift, one hundred and twenty talents (1 Kin x 10); the king of Assyria laid upon Hezekiah thirty talents of gold (2 Kin. xviii. 14); and in the extreme impoverishment to which the land was brought at the last, one talent of gold was laid upon it, after the death of Josiah, by the king of Egypt (2 Chron xxxvi 3).

† In the Jewish parable (SCHOETTGEN's *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 155), which bears resemblance to that before us, in so far as the sins of men are there represented under the image of enormous debt, which it is impossible to pay,—it is the tribute due from an entire city which is owing to the king, and which, at the entreaty of the inhabitants, he remits.

‡ According to Plutarch (*Reg. et Imp. Apotheqm.*), it was exactly the sum of ten thousand talents with which Darius sought to buy off Alexander, that he should not prosecute his conquests in Asia; as also the payment of the same sum was imposed by the Romans on Antiochus the Great, after his defeat by them; and when Alexander, at Susa, paid the debts of the whole Macedonian army, they amounted to only twice

is such an one as those servants in the parable of the Talents, to whom moneys were committed that they might trade with them: the greatness of the debt renders such a supposition very unlikely. Nor would the sale of the defaulter, with the confiscation of all his goods, have gone far to pay such a debt, unless he had been one living in great splendour and pomp;—though, it is true, the words of the original do not imply that the king expected the debt to be discharged with the proceeds of the sale, but only that, whatever those proceeds were, they were to be rendered into his treasury.

The sale of the debtor's wife and children,—for the king commanded them to be sold with him,—rested upon the assumption that they were a part of his property. Such was the theory, and such consequently the practice, of the Roman law. That it was allowed under the Mosaic law to sell an insolvent debtor, is implicitly stated, Lev. xxv. 39; and ver. 41 makes it probable that his family also came into bondage with him; and we find allusion to the same custom in other places (2 Kin. iv. 1; Neh. v. 6; Isai. l. 1; lviii. 6; Jer. xxxiv. 8-11; Amos ii. 6; viii. 6). Michaelis\* states that the later Jewish doctors declared against it, except in cases where a thief should be sold to make good the damage which he had done; and he is inclined to think that there was no such practice among the Jews in our Lord's time, but that this dealing with the servant is borrowed from the practice of neighbouring countries. There is much to make this probable: it is certain that the imprisoning of a debtor, which also we twice meet with in this parable (ver. 30, 34), formed no part of the Jewish law; indeed, where the creditor pos-

this sum, though every motive was at work to enhance the amount (see DROYSEN'S *Gesch. Alexanders*, p. 500). Von Bohlen (*Das Alt. Ind.* vol. ii. p. 119) gives some curious and almost incredible notices of the quantities of gold in the ancient East—I know not whether the immensity of the sum may partly have moved Origen to his strange supposition, that it can only be the man of sin (2 Thess. ii.) that is here indicated, or stranger still, the Devil! Compare THULO'S *Cod. Apocryphus*, vol. i. p. 887, and NEANDER'S *Kirch. Gesch.* vol. v. p. 1122.

\* *Mos. Recht*, vol. iii. pp. 58-60.

sessed the power of selling him into bondage, it would have been totally superfluous. "*The tormentors*" also (ver. 34), those who make inquisition by torture, have a foreign appearance, and would incline us to look for the locality of the parable elsewhere than in Judæa. For the spiritual significance, those may be said to be "*sold*" of God, whom He altogether alienates from himself, rejects and delivers for ever into the power of another. By the "*selling*" here may be indicated such "*everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power*;" thus Ps. xlv. 12, "*Thou sellest thy people for nought.*"

The servant, hearing the dreadful doom pronounced against him by his lord, betakes himself to supplication, the one resource that remains to him; he "*fell down and worshipped him.*" The formal act of worship, or adoration, consisted in prostration on the ground, and kissing of the feet and knees; and here Origen bids us to note the nice observance of proprieties in the slighter details of the parable. This servant "*worshipped*" the king, for that honour was paid to royal personages; but it is not said that the other servant worshipped,—which, as between equals, would have been out of place,—he only "*besought*" him. His words, "*Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,*" are characteristic of the extreme fear and anguish of the moment, which made him ready to promise impossible things, even mountains of gold, if only he might be delivered from his present fear. When words of a like kind find utterance from the lips of the sinner, now first convinced of sin, they show that he has not yet attained to a full insight into his relations with his God, but has still much to learn, and this chiefly, that no future obedience can make up for past disobedience; since that future God claims as his right, as only his due: it could not then, even were it perfect, which it will prove very far from being, make compensation for the past. He deceives himself, who promises this; and we may detect in these words, "*I will pay thee all,*" the voice of self-righteousness, imagining that, if only time were allowed, it could make good all the short-comings of the past. Thus



the words are exceedingly important, as very much explaining to us the later conduct of this man. It is clear that he whom this servant represents, had never come to a true recognition of the immensity of his debt. Little, in the subjective measure of his own estimate, was forgiven him, and therefore he loved little, or not at all. It is true that by his demeanour and his cry he did recognize his indebtedness, else would there have been no setting of him free: and he *might* have gone on, and, had he only been true to his own mercies, he would have gone on, to an ever fuller recognition of the grace shown him: but as it was, in a little while he lost sight of it altogether.

However, at the earnestness of his present prayer, "*the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*" The severity of God only endures till the sinner is brought to acknowledge his guilt; it is, indeed, like Joseph's harshness with his brethren, nothing else than love in disguise; and having done its work, having brought him to the acknowledgment of his guilt and misery, reappears as grace again, granting him more than even he had dared to ask or to hope, loosing the bands of his sins, and letting him go free. His lord "*forgave him the debt;*"\* and thus that very reckoning, which at first threatened him with irremediable ruin, might have been the chiefest mercy of all; bringing indeed his debt to a head, but only so bringing it, that it might be put away. So is it in God's dealings with his insolvent and bankrupt debtors among the children of men. There cannot be a forgiving in the dark. God will forgive; but He will have the sinner to know what and how much he

\* Compare Chardin (*Voy. en Perse*, Langlès' ed. vol. v. p. 285): Toute disgrâce en Perse emporte infailliblement avec soi la confiscation des biens, et c'est un revers prodigieux et épouvantable que ce changement de fortune, car un homme se trouve dénué en un instant si entièrement qu'il n'a rien à lui. On lui ôte ses biens, ses esclaves, et quelquefois jusqu'à sa femme et ses enfans. . . . Son sort s'adoucit dans la suite. Le roi déclare sa volonté sur son sujet. On lui rend presque toujours sa famille, partie de ses esclaves, et ses meubles, et assez souvent il revient au bout d'un temps à être rétabli dans les bonnes grâces de la cour, et à rentrer dans les emplois.

is forgiven; He summons him with his "Come now, and let us reason together," before ever the scarlet is made white as snow (Isai. i. 18). The sinner must know his sins a mountain of transgression, before they can be cast into the deep sea of God's mercy. He shall have the sentence of death in him first, for only thus will the words of life and pardon have any true meaning and abiding worth for him.

Such worth it has not for him to whom in this parable mercy was shown (Wisd. xii. 19); too soon he forgot that mercy, and showed that he had forgotten it by his conduct toward his fellow-servant. For, going out from the presence of his lord, he found,—immediately after, as would seem, and when the sense of his lord's goodness should have been yet fresh upon him,—"*one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred pence.*" How striking and instructive is that phrase, he "*went out*;" slight as it seems, yet is it one of the keywords of the parable. For how is it that we are ever in danger of acting as this servant? Because we "*go out*" of the presence of our God; because we do not *abide* there with an ever-lively sense of the greatness of our sin, and the greatness of his forgiveness. This "going out" is the sinner's forgetfulness of all this.\* He lacks the graces which he ought to have, because he has "forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet. i. 9). The term "*fellow-servant*" here does not imply any equality of rank between these two, or that they filled similar offices;† but indicates that they stood both in the same relation of servants to a common lord. And the sum is so small, "*a hundred pence,*" as the other was so large, "*ten thousand talents,*" to show how little man can offend against his brother, compared with the amount in which every man has offended against God,‡ so that, in Chrysostom's

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\* Theophylact: Οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ μένων, ἀσυμπαθής.

† Such would have been ὁμόδουλος, this is σύνδουλος.

‡ The Hebrew talent=300 shekels (Exod. xxxviii. 25, 26). As summing this, the proportion of the two debts would be as follows:

10,000 talents:100 pence::1,250,000:1.

that is, one million two hundred and fifty thousand to one.

words, these offences to those are as a drop of water to the boundless ocean.\*

The whole demeanour of this unrelenting creditor toward *his* debtor is graphically described: "*He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying,† Pay me that thou owest.*" Some press the word in the original, and find therein an aggravation of this servant's harshness and cruelty, as though he was not even sure whether the debt were owing or not;‡ yet this is on every ground to be rejected. That the debt was owing is plainly declared; he found a fellow-servant "*who owed him a hundred pence;*" and the very point of the whole parable would be lost by the supposition that we had here an oppressor or extortioner of the common sort. For him it would not have needed to speak a parable of *the kingdom of heaven*; his sin the law would have condemned; but here we have a far deeper lore—namely this, that it is not always *right*, but often most wrong, the most opposite to right, to press our *rights*, that in the kingdom of grace the *summum jus* may be indeed the *summa injuria*. This man was one who would fain be measured to by God in one measure, while he measured to his brethren in another. But this may not be. Each man must take his choice. It is free to him to dwell in the kingdom of grace; but then, receiving grace, he must show grace; finding love, he must exercise love. If, on the contrary, he exacts the uttermost, pushes his rights as far

\* Melancthon. Ideo autem tanta summa ponitur, ut sciamus nos valde multa et magna peccata habere coram Deo Sicut facile invenies multa, si vitam tuam aspicias; magna est securitas carnalis, magna negligentia in invocatione, magna diffidentia, et multæ dubitationes de Deo. Item vagantur sine fine cupiditates variæ.

† Erasmus: "Ἐπνίγεν, obtorto collo trahebat, . . . pertinet ad vi trahentem vel in carcerem, vel in judicem.

‡ The εἴ τι ὀφείλεις, which reading, as the more difficult, is to be preferred to ὅ τι ὀφείλεις, and which is retained by Lachmann, does not imply any doubt as to whether the debt were really due or no: but the conditional form was originally, though of course not here, a courteous form of making a demand, as there is often the same courteous use of ἴσως.

as they will go, he must look to have the uttermost exacted from him, and in the measure that he has meted, to have it measured back to him again.

It was in vain that "*his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him,*" using exactly the same words of entreaty which he, in the agony of his distress, had used, and using had found mercy: he continued inexorable; he "*went*" or departed, dragging the other with him till he could consign him into the safe keeping of the jailer; and thus, in the words of St. Chrysostom, he refused "to recognize the port in which he had himself so lately escaped shipwreck;" but delivered over his fellow-servant to the extreme severity of the law, unconscious that he was condemning himself, and revoking his own mercy. But such is man, so hard-hearted and cruel, when he walks otherwise than in a constant sense of forgiveness received from God; ignorance or forgetfulness of his own guilt makes him harsh, unforgiving, and cruel to others; or if by chance he is not so, he is only hindered from being so by the weak defences of natural character, which may at any moment be broken down. The man who knows not his own guilt, is ever ready to exclaim, as David in the time of his worst sin, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die" (2 Sam. xii. 5); to be as extreme in judging others, as he is slack in judging himself; while, on the other hand, it is to them which are spiritual that St. Paul commits the restoring of a brother who has been "overtaken in a fault" (Gal. vi. 1); and when he urges on Titus the duty of being gentle, and showing meekness unto all men, he adds, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Tit. iii. 3). In exact harmony with this view is that passage (Matt. i. 19), in which it is said that Joseph, "being a *just* man," would not make Mary a public example, whom yet he must have believed to have done him grievous wrong. It is just in man to be merciful, to be *humane* is *human*; none but the altogether Righteous may press his utmost rights; whether He will do so or not is determined by altogether different considerations, but He has not that to

hold his hand, which every *man* has, even the sense of his own proper guilt (John viii. 7-9).

It is not in heaven only that indignation is felt when men are thus measuring to others in so different a measure from that which has been measured to them. There are on earth also those who have learned what is the meaning of the mercy which the sinner finds, and what the obligations which it lays on him; and who grieve over all the lack of love and lack of forbearance which they behold around them: "*When his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry.*" They were "*sorry*;" their lord, as we read presently, was "*wroth*" (ver. 34); to them grief, to him anger, is ascribed. The distinction is not accidental, nor without its grounds. In man, the sense of his own guilt, the deep consciousness that whatever sin he sees come to ripeness in another, exists in its germ and seed in his own heart, with the feeling that all flesh is one, and that the sin of one calls for humiliation from all, will ever cause sorrow to be the predominant feeling in his heart, when the spectacle of moral evil is brought before his eyes; but in God the pure hatred of sin,\* which is, indeed, his love of holiness at its negative side, finds place. Being sorry, they "*came and told unto their lord all that was done*;" even as the righteous complain to God, and mourn in their prayer over the oppressions that are wrought in their sight: the things which they cannot set right themselves, the wrongs which they are not strong enough to redress themselves, they can at least bring unto Him. And He hears their cry. The king summons the unthankful and unmerciful servant into his presence, and addresses to him words of severest rebuke, which it is noticeable he had not used before on the ground of his debt, but now he uses on account of his cruelty and ingratitude: "*O thou wicked servant,† I forgave thee all that debt,*

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\* On the language of Scripture, attributing anger, repentance, jealousy to God, there are valuable remarks in Augustine's reply to the cavils of a Manichean (*Con. Adv. Leg. et Proph.* i. 20; and *Ad Simplic.* ii. qu. 2).

† Bengel: Sic non vocatus fuerat ob debitum,—a remark which Origen and Chrysostom had already made.

*because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?*—wert thou not bound, was there not a moral obligation on thee, to show compassion, even as compassion had been shown to thee?"\* The guilt laid to his charge is this, not that, *needing mercy*, he refused to show it, but that *having received mercy*, he remains unmerciful still. A most important difference! They, therefore, who like him are hard-hearted and cruel, do not thereby bear witness that they have received no mercy; on the contrary, the stress of their offence is, that having received an infinite mercy, they remain unmerciful yet. The objective fact, the great mercy for the world, that Christ has put away sin, and that we have been made partakers in our baptism of that benefit, stands firm, whether we allow it to exercise a purifying, sanctifying, humanizing influence on our hearts or not. Our faith apprehends, indeed, the benefit, but has not created it, any more than our opening of our eyes upon the sun has first set it in the heavens.

"*And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors,*" according to that word, "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (Jam. ii. 13). Before he had dealt with him as a creditor with a debtor, now as a judge with a criminal. "*The tormentors*" are not merely the keepers of the prison as such; but those who also, as the word implies, shall make the life of the prisoner bitter to him; even as there are "*tormentors*" in that world of woe, whereof this prison is a figure—fellow-sinners and evil angels—instruments of the just yet terrible judgments of God.† But here

\* See CHRYSOSTOM, *De Simult. Hom.* xx. 6, an admirable discourse.

† Grotius makes the βασανισταί merely = δεσμοφύλακες, and Kuinoel, who observes that debtors are given to safe keeping, but not to tortures; but this seems rather inaccurately stated, since we know, for instance, that in early times of Rome there were certain legal tortures, in the shape, at least, of a chain weighing fifteen pounds, and a pittance of food barely sufficient to sustain life (see ARNOLD'S *Hist. of Rome*, vol. i. p. 136), which the creditor was allowed to apply to the debtor for the purpose of bringing him to terms; and no doubt they often did not stop here. The old centurion (Livy, ii. 23) complains: Ductum se ab creditore non in servitium, sed in ergastulum et carni-

it is strange that the king delivers the offender to prison and to punishment not for his ingratitude or cruelty, but for the very debt which would appear before to have been entirely and without conditions remitted to him. When Hammond says, that the king "revoked his *designed* mercy," and would transfer this view of the transaction to the relation between God and sinners, this is an example of those evasions of a difficulty by help of an ambiguous expression, or a word ingeniously thrust in by the commentator, which are too frequent even in good interpreters of Scripture. It was not merely a mercy *designed*; the king had not merely *purposed* to forgive him, but in the distinct words of the earlier part of the parable, he "*forgave him the debt.*" An ingenious explanation is that which would make the debt for which he is now cast into prison, the debt of mercy and love, which he had not paid, but which yet was due, according to that word of St. Paul's, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another;" but neither can this be accepted as satisfactory. Nor are the cases of Adonijah and Shimei (1 Kin. ii.), which are sometimes adduced, altogether in point. They, no doubt, on occasion of their later fault, were punished far more severely than probably they would have been, had it not been for their former offences; yet still it is not the former crimes which are re-

ficiam esse. inde ostentare tergum, fœdum recentibus vestigiis vulnerum. In the East, too, where there is a continual suspicion that those who may appear the poorest, and who affirm themselves utterly insolvent, are actually in possession of some secret hoards of wealth, as is very often the case, the torture (*βάσανος*), in one shape or another, would be often applied, as we know that it is often nowadays, to make the debtor reveal these hoards; or if not with this hope, his life is often made bitter to him for the purpose of wringing the money demanded, from the compassion of his friends. In all these cases the jailer would be naturally the instrument employed for the purpose of inflicting these pains on the prisoner (see 1 Kin. xxii. 27); so that there is no reason why we should understand by these "*tormentors*" merely the keepers of the prison, "the jailers," as Tyndale's and Cranmer's Bibles give it, and not rather accept the word in its proper sense. Besides, if the unforgiving servant had merely been given into ward, his punishment would now have been less than that with which he was threatened, when his offence was not near so great as now it had become; for then he was to have been sold into slavery.

vived that they may be punished, but the later offence which calls down its own punishment; and moreover, to produce parallels from the questionable acts of imperfect men, is but a poor way of establishing the righteousness of God.

The question herein involved, Do sins, once forgiven, return on the sinner through his after offences? is one frequently and fully discussed by the Schoolmen;\* and of course this parable, with the arguments which may be drawn from it, takes always a prominent place in such discussions. But it may be worthy of consideration, whether the difficulties do not arise mainly from our allowing ourselves in too dead and formal a way of contemplating the forgiveness of sins; from our suffering the earthly circumstances of the remission of a debt to embarrass the heavenly truth, instead of regarding them as helps, but at the same time weak and often failing ones, for the setting forth of that truth. One cannot conceive of remission of sins apart from living communion with Christ; this is one of the great truths brought out in our baptismal service, that we are members of a righteous Person and justified in Him. But if through sin we cut ourselves off from communion with Him, we then fall back into a state of nature, which is of itself a state of condemnation and death, a state upon which therefore the wrath of God is abiding. If then, laying apart the contemplation of a man's sins as a formal debt, which must either be forgiven him or not, we contemplate the life out of Christ as a state of wrath, and the life in Christ as a state of grace, the first a walking in darkness, and the other a walking in the light, we can better understand how a man's sins should return upon him; that is, he sinning anew falls back into the darkness out of which he had been

\* By PET. LOMBARD (*Sent* iv. dist. 22), AQUINAS (*Sum. Theol.* pars iii. qu. 88), and H. DE STO VICTORE (*De Sacram.* ii. pars, 14, 9: *Utrum peccata semel dimissa redeant*). Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De Bapt. Con. Don.* i. 12. Cajetan, quoting Rom. xi. 29, "the gifts of God are without repentance" (*ἀμεταμέλητα*), explains thus the recalling of the pardon which had once been granted: *Repetuntur debita semel donata, non ut fuerant prius debita, sed ut modo effecta sunt materia ingratitude,*—which is exactly the decision of Aquinas.



delivered, and no doubt all that he has done of evil in former times adds to the thickness of that darkness, causes the wrath of God to abide more terribly on that state in which he now is, and therefore upon him (John v. 14). Even as also it must not be left out of sight that all forgiveness short of the crowning act of forgiveness and mercy, which will find place on the day of judgment, and will be followed by a total impossibility of sinning any more, is conditional,—in the very nature of things so conditional, that the condition must in every case be assumed, whether stated or no; that condition being that the forgiven man abide in faith and obedience, in that state of grace into which he has been brought; which he, whom the unmerciful servant here represents, had not done; but on the contrary evidently and plainly showed by his conduct, that he had “forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” The man that will partake of the final salvation must abide in Christ, else he will be “cast forth as a branch, and withered” (John xv. 6). This is the condition, not arbitrarily imposed from without, but belonging to the very essence of the salvation itself; as, if one were drawn from the raging sea, and set upon the safe shore, the condition of his continued safety would be that he abode there, and did not again cast himself into the raging waters. In this point of view an interesting parallel will be supplied to this parable by 1 John i. 7, “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us all from sin.” He whom this servant represents does not abide in the light of love, but falls back into the old darkness; he has, therefore, no fellowship with his brother, and the cleansing power of that blood ceases from him.

It is familiar to many that the Romish theologians have often found an argument for purgatory in the words, “*till he should pay all that was due*,”\* no less than in the parallel ex-

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\* See GERHARD'S *Loci Theoll.* loc. xxvii. 8. Chrysostom rightly explains it, *τουτέστι διηλεκώς, οὔτε γὰρ ἀποδώσει ποτέ*: and Augustine (*De Serm. Dom. in Mon.* i. 11): *Donec solvas . . . miror si non eam*

pression, Matt. v. 26; as though they designated a limit beyond which the punishment should not extend. But the phrase is proverbial, obviously signifying that the offender should now be dealt with according to the extreme rigour of the law;\* should have justice without mercy; and always *paying*, should yet never have *paid off*, his debt. For since man could never acquit the slightest portion of the debt in which he is indebted to God, the putting that as a condition of his liberation, which it was impossible could ever be fulfilled, was the strongest possible way of expressing the eternal duration of his punishment; just as, when the Phocæans abandoning their city swore that they would not return to it again, till the mass of iron which they plunged into the sea appeared once more upon the surface, it was in fact the most emphatic form they could devise of declaring that they would never return;—such an emphatic expression is the present.†

The Lord concludes with a word of earnest warning: “*So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts‡ forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*” “*So*”—with the same rigour; such treasures of wrath, as well as such treasures of grace, are with Him: He who could so greatly forgive, can also so greatly punish. “*My heavenly Father*”—not thereby implying, as Chrysostom supposes, that in such case He would not be *theirs*, since they, thus acting,

significat pœnam quæ vocatur æterna. So Remigius: Semper solvet, sed nunquam persolvat.

\* Just as the Roman proverbs, ad numum solvere, ad extremum assem solvere.

‡ Just so Macbeth thinks he has the strongest assurance of safety, while that is put as a condition of his defeat, which he counts can never come to pass:

“Let them fly all;

Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane

I cannot taint with fear.”

† Ἀπὸ τῶν καρδιῶν=ἐκ ψυχῆς, Ephes. vi. 6; to the exclusion, not merely of acts of hostility, but also of all *μνησικακία*. H. de Sto. Victor: Ut nec opere exerceat vindictam, nec corde reservet malitiam; and Jerome: Dominus addidit, De cordibus vestris, ut omnem simulationem fictæ pacis averteret.

would have denied the relationship; for our Lord says often, "My Father" (as ver. 19), when no such reason can be assigned. On the declaration itself we may observe that, according to the view given in Scripture, the Christian stands in a middle point, between a mercy received and a mercy yet needed. Sometimes the first is urged upon him as an argument for showing mercy—"forgiving one another, as Christ forgave you" (Col. iii. 13; Ephes. iv. 32); sometimes the last, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7); "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke vi. 37; Jam. v. 9); and so the son of Sirach (xxviii. 3, 4), "One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? he showeth no mercy to a man who is like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins?" and thus, while he is ever to look back on the mercy received as the source and motive of the mercy which he shows, he also looks forward to the mercy which he yet needs, and which he is assured that the merciful, according to what Bengel beautifully calls the *benigna talio* of the kingdom of God, shall receive, as a new provocation to its abundant exercise. Tholuck has some good remarks upon this point: "From the circumstance that mercy is here [Matt. v. 7] promised as the recompense of anterior mercy on our part, it might indeed be inferred that under 'merciful' we are to imagine such as have not yet in any degree partaken of mercy; but this conclusion would only be just on the supposition that the divine compassion consisted in an isolated act, of which man could be the object only once for all in his life. Seeing, however, that it is an act which extends over the whole life of the individual, and reaches its culminating point in eternity, it behoves us to consider the compassion of God for man, and man for his brethren, as reciprocally calling forth and affording a basis for one another."\* And this seems the explanation of a difficulty suggested by Origen,† namely, where in time are we to place the transactions shadowed forth in this parable?—for on

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\* *Auslegung der Bergpredigt*, p. 93.

† *Comm. in Matt.* xviii.

the one hand, there are reasons why they should be placed at the end of this present dispensation; since, it might be asked, when else does God take account with his servants for condemnation or acquittal? while yet on the other hand, if thus were they placed at the end of the dispensation, what further opportunity would there be for the forgiven servant to display the harshness and cruelty which he actually does display toward his fellow-servant? The difficulty disappears, when we no longer contemplate the forgiveness of the sinner as an isolated act, which must take place at some definite moment, and then is past and irrevocable; but consider it as ever going forward, as running parallel with and extending over the entire life of the redeemed, which, as it is a life of continual shortcoming, so has need to be a life of continual forgiveness.\*

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\* There is a fine story illustrative of this parable, told by Fleury (*Hist. Eccles.* vol. ii. p. 334). It is briefly this. Between two Christians at Antioch enmity and division had fallen out. After a while one of them desired to be reconciled, but the other, who was a priest, refused. While it was thus with them, the persecution of Valerian began; and Sapricius, the priest, having boldly confessed himself a Christian, was on the way to death. Nicephorus met him, and again sued for peace, which was again refused. While he was seeking, and the other refusing, they arrived at the place of execution. He that should have been the martyr was here terrified, offered to sacrifice to the gods, and despite the entreaties of the other did so, making shipwreck of his faith: while Nicephorus, boldly confessing, stepped in his place, and received the crown which Sapricius lost. This whole story runs finely parallel with our parable. Before Sapricius could have had grace to confess thus to Christ, he must have had his own ten thousand talents forgiven; but refusing to forgive a far lesser wrong, to put away the displeasure he had taken up on some infinitely lighter grounds against his brother, he forfeited all the advantages of his position, his Lord was angry, withdrew from him his grace, and suffered him again to fall under those powers of evil from which he had once been delivered. It comes out, too, in this story, that it is not merely the outward wrong and outrage upon a brother, which constitutes a likeness to the unmerciful servant, but the unforgiving temper, even apart from all such. So Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* i. qu. 25): *Noluit ignoscere; . . . intelligendum, tenuit contra eum hunc animum, ut supplicia illi vellet.*

## PARABLE IX.

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### *THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.*

MATTHEW XX. 1-16.

THIS parable stands in closest connexion with the four last verses of the preceding chapter, and can only be rightly understood by their help; so that the actual division of the chapters is here peculiarly unfortunate; often causing this parable to be explained quite independently of the context, and with no attempt to trace the circumstances out of which it sprung. And yet on the right tracing of this connexion, and the showing how the parable grew out of, and was in fact an answer to, Peter's question, "What shall we have?" the success of the exposition will mainly depend. The parable stands only second to that of the Unjust Steward in the number of explanations, and those the most widely different, that have been proposed for it; as it is also only second to that, if indeed second, in the difficulties which beset it. These Chrysostom\* states clearly and strongly; though few, I think, will be wholly satisfied with his solution of them. There is, first, the difficulty of bringing it into harmony with the saying by which it is introduced and concluded, and which it is plainly intended to illustrate: and secondly, there is the moral difficulty, the same as finds place in regard of the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son,—namely, how can one who is himself a member of the kingdom of God "be held," as Chrysostom terms it, "by that lowest of all passions, envy, and an evil eye," grudging in his heart the favours shown to other members of that kingdom? or, if it be denied that these murmurers and envious *are* members of that kingdom, how is this denial reconcilable with the fact of their having

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\* In *Matt. Hom.* 64.

laboured all day long in the vineyard, and ultimately carrying away their own reward? And lastly, there is the difficulty of deciding what is the salient point of the parable, the main doctrine which we are to gather from it.

Of its many interpreters there are first those who see in the equal penny to all, the key to the whole matter, and for whom its lesson is this,—the equality of rewards in the kingdom of God.\* This was the explanation which Luther gave in his earlier works, though he afterwards saw reason to withdraw it. But however this may appear to agree with the parable,† it evidently agrees not at all with the saying which sums it up, and contains its moral: “*Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first*,”‡ for such an equality would be, not a reversing of the order of the first and last, but a setting of all upon a level.

Others affirm that the parable is meant to set forth this truth,—that God does not regard the length of time during which men are occupied in his work, but the fidelity and strenuous exertion with which they accomplish that work.§ Of this view there will presently be occasion to speak more at

\* Augustine also (*Serm.* 343) says of the penny to all: *Denarius ille vita æterna est, quæ omnibus par est*,—but without affirming equality in the kingdom of God; for all the stars, as he goes on to say, are in the same firmament, yet “one star differeth from another star in glory” (*splendor dispar, cælum commune*). Cf. *De Sanct. Virgin.* 26. In like manner TERTULLIAN, *De Monog.* 10; BERNARD, *In Ps. Qui habitat, Serm.* ix. 4; and see AMBROSE, *Ep.* vii. 11., and GREGORY THE GREAT, *Moral.* iv. 36.

† Yet Spanheim (*Dub. Evang.* vol. iii. p. 785) is not easily answered, when against this he says: *Nec enim per denarium vita æterna intelligi potest, quippe qui denarius datur etiam murmuratoribus et invidis, nec datus exsatiatur, et datur illis qui recedere jubentur a Domino (ver. 14). Atqui nec murmuratorum portio est vita æterna, nec invidorum, nec homines a Deo abducit, sed conjungit cum illo, nec ulli datur, cui non plenam adferat satietatem gaudiorum.*

‡ Fritzsche, indeed, finds no difficulty in giving the sense of the gnome thus: *Qui postremi ad Messiam se adplicuerunt, primis accensebuntur, et qui primi eum secuti sunt, postremis*:—but this is doing evident violence to the words.

§ So Maldonatus: *Finis parabole est mercedem vitæ æternæ non tempori quo quis laboravit, sed labori et operi quod fecit respondere*; and Kuinoel the same.

large; it will be enough now to observe that the assumption that the last-hired labourers had worked more strenuously than the first, is entirely gratuitous; this circumstance, if the narrative had turned on it, would have scarcely been omitted. Calvin's explanation is but a modification of this, and in fact amounts to the same thing. He asserts that the intention of the parable is to warn us against being over-confident, because we have begun well;\* lest (though this is not his illustration), like the hare in the fable, growing careless and remiss in our exertions, we allow others to outrun us; and so, from having seemed the first, fall into the hindmost rank: he takes it to convey a warning that no one begin to boast, or consider the battle won, till he put off his armour. But to him also it may be replied that this agrees not with the circumstances of the parable, since the labourers who were first engaged are *not* accused of having grown slack in labour during the latter part of the day, and there is nothing to warrant any such assumption.

There are others who make—not the penny equal to all, but the successive hours at which the different bands of labourers were hired, the most prominent circumstance of the parable. And these interpreters may be again subdivided; for there are first those who, as Origen and Hilary, make it to contain a history of the different summonses to a work of righteousness, which God has made to men from the beginning of the world,—to Adam,—to Noah,—to Abraham,—to Moses,—and lastly to the Apostles, bidding them each, in his order, to go work in his vineyard. Of these, all the earlier lived during weaker and more imperfect dispensations, and underwent, therefore, a harder labour, in that they had not such abundant gifts of the Spirit, such clear knowledge of the grace of God in Christ, to sustain them, as the later called, the

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\* Non alio Dominum spectâsse quam ut suos ad pergendum continuis stimulis incitaret. Scimus enim segnitiam fere ex nimia fiducia nasci. If we found, indeed, the ~~gnome~~ <sup>gnome</sup> by itself, we might then say that such was his purpose in it: see the admirable use which Chrysostom (*In Matt. Hom.* 67, ad finem) makes of it, in this regard.

members of the Christian Church. Their heavier toil, therefore, might aptly be set forth by a longer period of work, and that at the more oppressive time of the day (cf. Acts xv. 10); while the Apostles, and the other faithful called into God's vineyard at the eleventh hour ("the last time," or, "the last hour," as St. John [1 Ep. ii. 18] terms it), and partakers of the larger freer grace now given in Christ, had to endure little by comparison. But in reply to this explanation,\* it may be asked, *When* could that murmuring have taken place, even supposing the people of God *could* thus grudge because of the larger grace freely bestowed upon others? Those prior generations could not have so murmured in their lifetime; for before the things were even revealed which God had prepared for his people that came after, they were in their graves. Far less is it to be conceived as finding place in the day of judgment, or in the kingdom of love made perfect. Unless, then, we quite explain away the murmuring, accepting Chrysostom's ingenious solution of it, that the Lord only introduced it to magnify the greatness of the things freely given to his disciples, which He would thus imply were so great and glorious, that those who lived before they were imparted might be provoked to murmur at the comparison of themselves with their more richly endowed successors, were it possible to imagine such a spirit of envy finding room in their hearts,—this explanation of the parable seems untenable; as, were it worth while, much more might be brought against it.

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\* Were it the right one, John iv. 35-38 would afford a most interesting parallel. for it is exactly this which is there declared. The "other men" that laboured (ver. 38) are the generations that went before, doing their harder tasks under the Law, breaking up the fallow ground of men's hearts, and with toil and tears sowing their seed,—this would answer to the bearing here the burden and heat of the day. The blessedness of the disciples is there magnified, in that theirs is an easier task, the reaping and gathering in of the spiritual harvest; they enter upon other men's labours;—which is the counterpart to the coming into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. But the true feeling of the first labourers and of the last, of the hardest-tasked and the lightest, is there also declared, the only feeling which could find place in the kingdom of God, they "rejoice together" (ver. 38), are unenvying partakers of the same joy.



There are, secondly, those interpreters who, in the different hours at which the labourers are hired, see different periods of men's lives, at which they enter on the Lord's work; and who affirm that the purpose is to encourage those who have entered late on his service, now to labour heartily, not allowing the consciousness of past negligences to make slack their hands; since they too, if only, they will labour with their might for the time, long or short, which remains, shall receive with the others a full reward. This is, in the main, Chrysostom's view;\* but while, under certain limitations, such encouragement may undoubtedly be drawn from the parable, it is another thing to say that this is the admonishment which it is especially meant to convey. In what living connexion would the parable then stand with what went before, with Peter's question, or with the temper out of which that question grew, and which this teaching of the Lord was meant to meet and to correct?

But the explanation, which certainly contains more truth in it than all hitherto passed under review, is that which finds here a warning and a prophecy of the causes which would lead to the rejection of the Jews, the first called into the vineyard of the Lord;—these causes being mainly their proud appreciation of themselves and of their own work; their displeasure at seeing the Gentiles, aliens so long, put on the same footing, admitted to equal privileges, with themselves in the kingdom of God:† and an agreement or covenant being made with the first hired, and none with those subsequently engaged, has seemed a confirmation of this view. Doubtless this applica-

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\* And also Jerome's (*Comm. in Matt.*): *Mihi videntur primæ horæ esse operarii Samuel et Jeremias et Baptista Johannes, qui possunt cum Psalmistâ dicere, Ex utero matris meæ Deus es tu. Tertiæ vero horæ operarii sunt qui in pubertate, servire Deo cœperunt. Sextæ horæ, qui maturâ etate susceperunt jugum Christi: nonæ, qui jam declinant ad senium: porro undecimæ, qui ultimâ senectute. Et tamen omnes pariter accipiunt præmium, licet diversus labor sit.*

† Cocceius: *Subindicatur futura murmuratio et indignatio Judæorum contra gentes: quorum præsumptio est, gentes in regno Christi ipsis debere subjici, et non debere pervenire ad præmium, nisi ipsi quoque ita laboraverint, ut Judæi per multa sæcula laborarent.*

tion of the parable is by no means to be excluded. It ~~was~~ notably fulfilled in the Jews; their conduct did supply a solemn confirmation of the need of the warning here given: yet at the same time this fulfilment was only one out of many; for our Lord's words are so rich in meaning, so bring out the essential and abiding relations between men and God, that they are continually finding their fulfilment. Had this, however, been his primary meaning, we should expect to hear of but two bands of labourers, the first hired and the last: all who come between would only serve to confuse and perplex. The solution sometimes given of this objection,—that the successive hirings are the successive summonses to the Jews; first, under Moses and Aaron; secondly, under David and the kings; thirdly, under the Maccabæan chiefs and priests; and lastly, in the time of Christ and his Apostles; or that these are severally Jews, Samaritans, and proselytes of greater and less strictness,—seems devised merely to escape from an embarrassment, and only witnesses for its existence without removing it.\*

Better then to say that the parable is directed against a wrong temper and spirit of mind, which indeed was notably manifested in the Jews, but one against which not merely they, but all men in possession of spiritual privileges, have need to be, and are here, warned: while at the same time the immediate occasion from which it rose, was not one in which they were involved. This is clear, for the warning was not primarily addressed to them, but to the Apostles, as the chiefest and foremost in the Christian Church, the earliest called to labour in the Lord's vineyard—"the first," both in time, and in the amount of suffering and toil which they would have to undergo. They had seen the rich young man (xix. 22) go sorrowful away, unable to abide the proof by which the Lord had mercifully revealed to him how strong the bands whereby

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\* This explanation of the parable, however, is maintained by, and satisfies, Grotius; and also by Mr. Grenwell (*Exp. of the Par.* vol. iv. p. 370, seq.), who has done for it everything whereof it is capable, to win acceptance for it.

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he was yet holden to the world and the things of the world. They (for Peter here, as in so many other instances, is the representative and spokesman of all) would fain know what *their* reward should be, who had done this very thing from which he had shrunk, and had forsaken all for the Gospel's sake (ver. 27). The Lord answers them first and fully, that they and as many as should do the same for his sake, should reap an abundant reward (ver. 28, 29). At the same time the question itself, "What shall we have?" was not a right one; it put their relation to their Lord on a wrong footing; there was a tendency in the question to bring their obedience to a calculation of so much work, so much reward. There was also a certain self-complacency lurking in this speech. That spirit of self-exalting comparison of ourselves with others, which is so likely to be stirring, when we behold any signal failure on their part, was at work in them; and the very answer which the Lord gave to their question would have been as fuel to the fire, unless it had been accompanied with the warning of the parable. It is true that this self-complacent thought was probably only as an under-thought in Peter's mind, obscurely working within him, one of which he was himself hardly conscious; but that Lord who knew what was in man, saw with a glance into the depths of his heart, and having replied to the direct question, went on by this further teaching to crush the evil in the bud, and before it should proceed to unfold itself further. "Not of works, lest any man should boast;" this was the truth which they were in danger of losing sight of, and which He would now by the parable enforce; and if nothing of works, but all of grace for all, then no glorying of one over another, no grudging of one against another, no claim as of right upon the part of any.\* In that question of

\* Gerhard: Sub finem, quia Christo Petri et reliquorum confidentia non fuit ignota, et verendumerat ne ob magnificam hanc promissionem sese aliis præferrent, hunc locum gravi sententiâ concludit, quâ ipsos et in primis Petrum sub modestiâ et metu continere cupit, Multi autem primi erunt novissimi, et novissimi primi. . . Nolite ergo altum sapere, nolite arroganter de vobis ipsis sentire. So also Olshausen, who re-

theirs there spake out something of the spirit of the hireling, and it is against this spirit that the parable is directed, which might justly be entitled, *On the nature of rewards in the kingdom of God*,—the whole finding a most instructive commentary in Rom. iv. 1-4, which passage supplies a parallel not indeed verbal, but a more deeply interesting, that is, a real parallel with the present.

So far as it is addressed to Peter, and in him to all true believers, the parable is rather a warning against what *might* be, if they were not careful to watch against it, than a prophecy of what *would* be.\* For we cannot conceive of him who dwells in love as allowing himself in envious and grudging thoughts against any of his brethren, because, though they have entered later on the service of God, or been engaged in a lighter labour, they will yet be sharers with him of the same heavenly reward; or refusing to welcome them gladly to all the blessings and privileges of the communion of Christ. Least of all can we imagine him so to forget that he also is saved by grace, as to allow such hateful feelings to come to a head, actually to take form and shape, which they do in the parable, or as justifying them to himself and to God, like the spokesman among the murmurers here. We cannot conceive this even here in our present imperfect state, much less in the perfected kingdom hereafter; for love “rejoices in the truth,”† and the very fact of one so grudging against another would prove that he himself did not dwell in love, and therefore was under sentence of exclusion from that kingdom.‡ It is then

fers to ver. 20-28 of this chapter (cf Mark x. 35), as an evidence how liable the promise (xix. 28) was to be perverted and misunderstood by the old man not yet wholly mortified in the Apostles.

\* Bengel: Respectu Apostolorum non est prædictio, sed admonitio.

† In the beautiful words of Leighton (*Prælect.* 6): ‘Ο φθόνος ἔξω τοῦ θείου χοροῦ’ sed caritas absolutissima, quâ unusquisque simul cum suâ alterius mutuo felicitate fruitur et beatus est, illâ scilicet tanquàm suâ collætatus; unde inter illos infinita quædam beatitudinis repercussio et multiplicatio est; qualis foret splendor aulæ auro et gemmis, pleno regum et magnatum choro, nitentis, cujus parietes speculis undique lucidissimis obtecti essent.

‡ Gregory the Great says excellently (*Hom.* 19, in *Evang.*) on this

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a warning to the Apostles, and through them to all believers, of what might be, not a prophecy of what shall be with any who share in the final reward;—a solemn warning that however long continued their work, abundant their labours, yet if they had not this charity to their brethren, this humility before God, they were nothing;—that pride and a self-complacent estimation of their work, like the fly in the precious ointment, would spoil the work, however great it might be, since that work stands only in humility; and from first they would fall to last.—There is then this difference between the narration in the parable, and the truth of which it is the exponent, that while it would not have been consistent with equity for the householder altogether to have deprived the first labourers of their hire, notwithstanding their pride and discontent, and consequently they receive their wages, and are not punished with more than a severe rebuke, yet the lesson to be taught to Peter, and through him to all disciples in all times, is, that the first may be altogether last, that those who seem chiefest in labour, yet, if they forget withal that the reward is of grace and not of works, and begin to boast and exalt themselves above their fellow-labourers, may altogether lose the things which they have wrought;\* while those who seem last, may yet, by keeping their humility, be acknowledged first and foremost in the day of God.

With these preliminary remarks, which the difficulties of the parable have made it necessary to draw out at length, we may now proceed to consider its details. “*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard:*” in other words, The manner of God’s dealings with those whom He calls to the privileges of working in his Church, his kingdom in its present imperfect development, is similar to that of a householder, who should go out early in the morning

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murmuring: Cœlorum regnum nullus murmurans accipit; nullus qui accipit, murmurare poterit.

\* Gregory the Great again (*Moral. xix. 21*): *Perit omne quod agitur, si non sollicitè in humilitate custoditur.*

to hire labourers.\* This is ever true in the heavenly world, that God seeks his labourers, it is not they who seek Him: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16). Every summons to a work in the heavenly vineyard is from the Lord: man's heart never originates the impulse; all which is man's in the matter is, that he do not resist the summons, which it is his melancholy prerogative that he is able to do. It is "a call," according to the instructive Scriptural expression: but as in the natural world a call implies no force, may be listened to or may be disregarded, so also is it in the spiritual.

*"And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard."*† The different footing upon which the different bands of labourers went to their work, would scarcely have been so expressly noted, if no signification were to be found therein. An agreement was made by these first-hired labourers before they entered on their labour, exactly the agreement and bargain which Peter wished to make, "What shall we have?"—while those subsequently engaged went in a simpler spirit, trusting that whatever was right and equitable the householder would give them. Thus we have here upon the part of some indications, at the very beginning, of that wrong spirit which presently comes to a

\* Fleck. Non in unâ personâ sed in totâ actione collatio consistit;—a remark of frequent application.

† A denarius, a Roman silver coin, which passed current as equal to the Greek drachm, though in fact some few grains lighter. It was  $=8\frac{1}{2}d.$  at the latter end of the commonwealth, afterwards something less, of our money. It was not an uncommon, though a liberal, day's pay (see Tob. v. 14). Morier, in his *Second Journey through Persia*, p. 265, mentions having noted in the market-place at Hamadan a custom like that alluded to in the parable:—"Here we observed every morning before the sun rose, that a numerous band of peasants were collected with spades in their hands, waiting to be hired for the day to work in the surrounding fields. This custom struck me as a most happy illustration of our Saviour's parable, particularly when, passing by the same place late in the day, we still found others standing idle, and remembered his words, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' as most applicable to their situation; for on putting the very same question to them, they answered us, 'Because no man hath hired us.'"

head (ver. 11; 12); on the part of others, we have the true spirit of humble waiting upon the Lord, in full assurance that He will give far more than we can desire or deserve, that God is not unrighteous to forget any labour of love, that his servants can safely trust in Him, who is an abundant rewarder of all them that seek and that serve Him.\*

At the third, at the sixth, and at the ninth hour,—or at nine in the morning, at midday, and at three in the afternoon,†—he again went into the market-place,‡ and those whom he found waiting there, sent into his vineyard. “*And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?*” All activity out of Christ, all labour that is not labour in his Church, is in his sight a “*standing idle.*” “*They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us.*” There was a certain amount of rebuke in the question, which it is intended that this answer shall clear away; for it belongs to the idea of the parable, that it shall be accepted as perfectly satisfactory. It is not then in a Christian land, where men grow up under sacramental obligations, with the pure word of God sounding in their ears, that this answer could be given; or at least, only in such woful instances as that, which, alas! our own

\* Thus Bernard, in a passage (*In Cant. Serm. xiv. 4*), containing many interesting allusions to this parable: *Ille [Judæus] pacto conventionis, ego placito voluntatis innitor.*

† These would not, except just at the equinoxes, be exactly the hours; for the Jews, as well as the Greeks and Romans, divided the natural day, that between sunrise and sunset, into twelve equal parts (*John xi. 9*), which parts must of course have been considerably longer in summer than in winter; for though the difference between the longest and the shortest day is not so great in Palestine as with us, yet it is by no means trifling; the longest day is of 14<sup>h</sup> 12<sup>m</sup> duration, the shortest of 9<sup>h</sup> 48<sup>m</sup>, with a difference therefore of 4<sup>h</sup> 24<sup>m</sup>, so that an hour on the longest day would be exactly 22<sup>m</sup> longer than an hour on the shortest. The equinoctial hours did not come into use until the fourth century (see the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt. s. v. Hora*, p. 485). Probably the day was also divided into the four larger parts here indicated, just as the Roman night into four watches, and indeed the Jewish no less: the four divisions of the latter are given in a popular form, *Mark xiii. 35* (see *SCHOETTGEN's Hor. Heb. vol. i. p. 186*).

‡ Maldonatus: *Totum mundum qui extra Ecclesiam est.*

land at the present affords, where in the bosom of the Church multitudes have been allowed to grow up ignorant of the blessings which her communion affords, and the responsibilities it lays upon them; and even in *their* mouths there would only be a partial truth in the answer, "*No man hath hired us*;" since even they cannot be *altogether* ignorant of their Christian vocation. Only when the kingdom of God is first set up in a land, enters as a new and hitherto unknown power, could any with full truth reply, "*No man hath hired us*,—if we have been living in disobedience to God, it has been because we were ignorant of Him; if we were serving Satan, it was because we knew no other master and no better service."

While then the excuse which these labourers plead, appertains not to them who, growing up within the Church, have despised to the last, or nearly to the last, God's repeated biddings to go work in his vineyard; while the unscriptural corollary cannot be appended to the parable,\* that it matters

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\* The Author of a modern Latin essay, *De Serâ Resipiscentiâ*, anxious to rescue this part of the parable from the dangerous abuse to which it is often subjected, observes that it should have been otherwise constructed, if such a doctrine were to be drawn from it: *Oportuisset dixisse regnum cœlorum simile est homini egresso alto mane, ad conducendum operarios in vineam suam. Invenit tales quibus fecit maxima promissa, sed isti hæc rejecerunt, præferentes manere in foro ad ludendum et compotandum. Reversus est horâ tertiâ, eadem illis obtulit, et instantius eos rogavit, sed absque fructu. . . . Idem fecit horâ sextâ et nonâ, ipsius autem oblationes et promissiones semper fuerunt inutiles. Illi quin etiam ipsum male exceperunt, ipsique proterve dixerunt, quod nollent pro eo laborare. Ipse ne sic quidem offensus, reversus est, cum non nisi una diei hora superesset, eandemque obtulit summam quam mane. Illi tunc videntes quod summam tantam lucrari possent labore momentaneo, tandem passi sunt hoc sibi persuaderi, spectantes maxime quod dies fere transactus foret ante suum in vineam adventum. Augustine (*Serm. lxxxvii. 6*) has the same line of thought: Numquid enim et illi, qui sunt ad vineam conducti, quando ad illos exhibat paterfamilias, ut conduceret quos invenit horâ tertiâ . . . dixerunt illi: Expecta, non illuc imus nisi horâ sextâ? aut quos invenit horâ sextâ dixerunt: Non imus nisi horâ nonâ . . . Omnibus enim tantumdem daturus est: quare nos amplius fatigamur? Quid ille daturus sit, et quid factururus sit, penes ipsum consilium est. Tu quando vocaris, veni. Cf. GREGORY NAZIANZ. *Orat. xl. 20*, against those who used this parable as an argument for deferring their baptism.*



little at what time of men's lives they enter heartily upon his service, how long they despise his vows which have been upon them from the beginning; yet one would not therefore deny that there is such a thing even in the Christian Church as men being called,—or to speak more correctly, since they were called long before,—as men obeying the call and entering the Lord's vineyard, at the third, or sixth, or ninth, or even the eleventh hour. Only the case of such will be parallel not to that of any of these labourers—at least in regard of being able to make the same excuse as they did, but rather to that of the son, who being bidden to go work in his father's vineyard, refused, but afterwards repented and went (Matt. xxi. 28); and such an one, instead of clearing himself as respects the past, which these labourers do, will on the contrary humble himself most deeply, while he considers all his neglected opportunities and the long-continued despite which he has done to the Spirit of grace. Yet while thus none can plead, "*No man hath hired us,*" in a land where the Christian Church has long been established, and the knowledge of Christ more or less brought home unto all, the parable is not therefore without its application in such; since there also there will be many entering into the Lord's vineyard at different periods, even to a late one, of their lives; and who, truly repenting their past unprofitableness, and not attempting to excuse it, may find their work, be it for a long or a short while, graciously accepted now, and may share hereafter in the full rewards of the kingdom. For in truth time belongs not to the kingdom of God. Not "How much hast thou done?" but "What art thou now?" will be the great question of the last day. Of course we must never forget that all which men have *done* will greatly affect what they *are*; yet still the parable is a protest against the whole *quantitative* appreciation of men's works (the Romanist), as distinct from the *qualitative*, against all which would make the works the end, and man the means, instead of the man the end, and the works the means—against that scheme which, however un-

consciously, lies at the root of so many of the confusions in our theology at this day.\*

"So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, 'Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first;'"—the same even, for so the law enjoined in regard of the hired servant, "At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it" (Deut. xxiv. 15. See Lev. xix. 13; Job vii. 2; Mal. iii. 5; Jam. v. 4; Tob. iv. 14). Christ is the "steward," or overseer rather, set over all God's house (Heb. iii. 6; John v. 27; Matt. xi. 27). The whole economy of salvation has been put in his hands, and as part of this the distribution of rewards. And first the last hired are paid, those who came in without any agreement made, and they receive a full penny. And here is encouragement—not to delay entering on God's service till late in our lives; for we everywhere find in Scripture a marked blessing resting on early piety—but encouragement for those who have so done now to work heartily and with their might. Misgivings concerning the acceptance of their work do not

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\* This mechanical, as opposed to the dynamic, idea of righteousness, is carried to the greatest perfection of all in the Chinese theology. Thus in that remarkable *Livre des récompenses et des peines*, the mechanical, or to speak more truly, the arithmetical idea of righteousness comes out with all possible distinctness. For example, p. 124: Pour devenir immortel, il faut avoir amassé trois mille mérites, et huit cent actions vertueuses. How glorious, on the other hand, are Thauler's words upon the way in which men may have restored to them "the years which the canker-worm has eaten." Libet hic quærere quo pacto perditum tempus unquam recuperare quis possit, cum nullum sit tam breve et velox temporis momentum, quod non totum cum omni virtute ac facultate nostrâ Deo creatori debeamus. Sed hæc in parte concilium sanissimum præstat. Avertat se quisque cum omnibus tam supremis quam infimis viribus suis ab omni loco et tempore, seque in illud Nunc æternitatis recipiat, ubi Deus essentialiter in stabili quodam Nunc existit. Ibi neque præteritum aliquid est, neque futurum. Ibi principium et finis universi temporis præsentia adsunt. Ibi, in Deo scilicet, deperdita omnia reperiuntur. Et qui in consuetudinem ducunt sæpius in Deum se immergere atque in ipso commorari, hi nimium fiunt locupletes, immo plura inveniunt quam deperdere queant . . . Denique et neglecta omnia atque deperdita in ipso quoque Dominicæ passionis pretiosissimo thesauro reperire ac recuperare licet.

make men work the more strenuously; on the contrary, nothing so effectually cuts the nerves of all exertion; but there is that in this part of the parable which may help to remove such misgivings in those who would be most likely to feel them: let them labour in hope; they too shall be sharers in the full blessings of Christ and of his salvation.

It may be securely inferred that all between the last and the first hired received the penny as well; though it is the first hired alone who remonstrates, as those in whose case the injustice, for so it seemed to them, appeared the most flagrant. To assume, as so many have done, Chrysostom, Maldonatus, Hammond, Waterland, and of late Olshausen, that these first hired had been doing their work negligently by comparison, while the last hired, such for instance as a Paul, whom Origen in this view, and quoting 1 Cor. xv. 10, suggests, had done it with their might, and had in fact accomplished as much in their hour as the others in their day, is to assume that of which there is not the slightest trace in the narrative. And more than this, such an assumption effectually blunts the point of the parable, which lies in this very thing, that men may do and suffer much, infinitely more than others, and yet be rejected, while those others are received,—that first may be last, and last first. It is not indeed strange that a rationalist interpreter like Kuinoel should thus explain the parable; for in fact the whole matter is thus taken out of the spiritual world, and brought down to the commonest region of sense; since if one man does as much work in one hour as another in twelve, it is only natural that he should receive an equal reward. Every difficulty disappears,—except indeed this, how the Lord should have thought it worth his while to utter a parable for the justifying of so very ordinary a transaction; or if He did, should have omitted to state that very thing which constituted the justification. But indeed this view exactly brings us back to the level, from which to raise us the parable was expressly spoken; we have a Jewish,\* instead of

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\* Singularly enough, exactly such a one is quoted by Lightfoot and others from the Talmud; it is concerning a celebrated Rabbi, who died

an evangelical, parable; an affirmation that the reward is not of grace but of debt,—the very untruth which it was meant to rebuke and to reprove.

When the first hired received the same sum as the others and no more, "*they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat\* of the day.*" These other, they would say, have been labouring not merely for a far shorter time; but when they entered on their

young, and is as follows: "To what was R. Bon Bar Chaija like? To a king who hired many labourers, among whom there was one hired who performed his task extraordinarily well. What did the king? He took him aside and walked with him to and fro. When even was come, those labourers came, that they might receive their hire. and he gave him a complete hire with the rest. And the labourers murmured, saying, 'We have laboured hard all the day, and this man only two hours, yet he hath received as much wages as we.' The king saith to them, 'He hath laboured more in those two hours than you in the whole day.' So R. Bon phied the law more in eight and twenty years than another in a hundred years." Cf. the *Spicilegium* of L. Capellus, p. 28.—Von Hammer (*Fundgruben d. Orients*, vol. 1. p. 157) has a curious extract from the *Sunna*, or collection of Mahomet's traditional sayings, which looks like a distorted image of our parable. The Jew, the Christian, the Mahomedan are likened to three different bands of labourers, hired at different periods of the day, at morning, midday, and afternoon. The latest hired received in the evening twice as much as the others. It ends thus: "The Jews and Christians will complain and say, 'Lord, Thou hast given two carats to these, and only one to us.' But the Lord will say, 'Have I wronged you in your reward?' They answer, 'No.' 'Then learn that the other is an overflowing of my grace.'" See the same with immaterial differences in GEROCK'S *Christol. d. Koran*, p. 141; and Möhler (*Verm. Schrift.* vol. i. p. 355) mentions that when seeking for prophetic intimations of their faith in our Scriptures, the Mahomedans make distinct reference to this parable and its successive bands of labourers.

\* The *καύσων*, which word is used in the LXX. for the dry burning east wind (Isai. xlix. 10; Ezek. xix. 12), so fatal to all vegetable life, "the wind from the wilderness" (Hos. xiii. 15), of which Jerome says (*Com. in Os.* iii. 11): *Καύσωνα, i. e. ariditatem, sive ventum urentem, qui contrarius floribus est, et germinantia cuncta disperdit.* It has much in common with, though it has not altogether so malignant a character as, the desert wind Sam or Samiel, to which modern travellers attribute yet more destructive effects, speaking of it as at times fatal to the life of man; and whose effects Venema (*Comm. in Ps.* xci. 6) thus describes: *Penetrat ventus, venenatis particulis mixtus, aestu suo venenato in viscera, et præsentissimum ac dolorificum addert exitium. Subito corpora fæde afficiuntur ac putrescunt.*

tasks it was already the cool of the evening, when toil is no longer oppressive, while we have borne the scorching heat of the middle noon. But here the perplexing dilemma meets us, Either these are of the number of God's faithful people;—how then can they murmur against Him, and grudge against their fellow-servants? or they are not of that number;—what then can we understand of their having laboured the whole day through in his vineyard, and actually carrying away at last the penny, the reward of eternal life? It is a very unnatural way of escaping the difficulty, to understand "*Take that which is thine,*" as meaning, "Take the damnation which belongs to thee, and is the just punishment of thy pride and discontent." Theophylact and others try to mitigate as much as possible the guilt of their murmuring, and make it no more than the expression of that surprise and admiration\* which will escape from some, at the unexpected position that others, of perhaps small account here, will occupy in the future kingdom of glory.† But the expression of their discontent is too strong, and the rebuke which it calls out too severe, to allow of any such explaining of their dissatisfaction. Better to say that there is no analogy to be found for this murmuring in the future world of glory;—and only where there is a great admixture of the old man, in the present world of grace. There is here rather a teaching by contraries; it is saying, "Since you cannot conceive such a spirit as that here held up before you, and which you feel to be so sinful and hateful, finding place in the perfected kingdom of God, check betimes its beginnings; check all inclinations to look grudgingly at your brethren, who, having in times past

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\* Bellarmine: *Admirationem* potius quam *querimoniam* significare videtur.

† The explanation given by Gregory the Great (*Hom. 19 in Evang.*) is of the same kind, though with particular reference to the saints and patriarchs of the Old Testament: *Quia antiqui patres usque ad adventum Domini ducti ad regnum non sunt, . . . hoc ipsum murmurasse est; quod et recte pro percipiendo regno vixerunt, et tamen diu ad percipiendum regnum dilati sunt.* Origen in the same spirit quotes Heb. xi. 39, 40.

grievously departed from God, have now found a place beside yourselves in his kingdom, and are sharers in the same spiritual privileges;\* or to look down upon and despise those who occupy a less important field of labour, who are called in the providence of God to endure and suffer less than yourselves : repress all inclinations to pride yourselves on your own doings, as though they gave you a claim of right upon God, instead of accepting all of his free mercy and undeserved bounty, and confessing that you as well as others must be saved entirely by grace."

With regard to the murmurers actually receiving their penny, it is ingeniously remarked by a Romish expositor, that the denarius or penny was of different kinds; there was the double, the treble, the fourfold; that of brass or rather copper, of silver, and of gold. The Jew (for he applies the parable to Jew and Gentile) received what was his, his penny of the meaner metal, his earthly reward, and with that went his way; but the Gentile the golden penny, the spiritual reward, grace and glory, admission into the presence of God. Ingenious as this notion is, of course no one will for an instant accept it as a fair explanation of the difficulty; and yet it may suggest valuable considerations. The penny is very different to the different receivers; *objectively* the same, *subjectively* it is very different; it is in fact to every one exactly what he will make it.† What the Lord said to Abraham, He says unto all,

\* There are many and interesting points of comparison, as Jerome observes, between this parable and that of the Prodigal Son; and chiefly between the murmuring labourers in this, and the elder brother in that. They had borne the burden and heat of the day—he had served his father these many years; they grudged to see the labourers of the eleventh hour made equal with themselves—he to see the Prodigal received into the full blessings of his father's house; the lord of the vineyard remonstrates with them for their narrow-heartedness—and in like manner the father with him.

† Thus Aquinas, in answer to the question whether there will be degrees of glory in the future world, replies that in one sense there will, in another there will not; for, he adds, *Contingit aliquem perfectius frui Deo quam alium, ex eo quod est melius dispositus vel ordinatus ad ejus fruitionem*;—and again; *Virtus erit quasi materialis dispositio ad mensuram gratiæ et gloriæ suscipiendæ*. There is *one*

"I am thy exceeding great reward;" and He has no other reward to impart to any save only this, namely Himself. To "see Him as He is," this is his one reward, the penny unto all. But they whom these murmuring labourers represent had been labouring for something else besides the knowledge and enjoyment of God, with an eye to some other reward, to something on account of which they could glory in themselves, and glory over others. It was not merely to have *much* which they desired, but to have *more* than others; not to grow together with the whole body of Christ, but to get before and beyond their brethren;\* and therefore the penny, because it was common to all, did not seem enough, while in fact it was to each what he would make it. For if the vision of God shall constitute the blessedness of the future world, then they whose spiritual eye is most enlightened, will drink in most of his glory; then, since only like can know like, all advances which

vision of God; but there are very different capacities for enjoying that vision, as is profoundly expressed in DANTE'S *Paradiso*, by the circles concentric, but ever growing smaller and thus nearer to the centre of light and life. Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. lxxii* 1) carries yet further the view of the one vision of God for all: he compares it to the light which gladdens the healthy eye, but torments the diseased (*non mutatus, sed mutatum*).—It was also a favourite notion with the mystics that God would not put forth a twofold power to punish and reward, but the same power acting differently on different natures; as, to use their own illustration, the same heat hardens the clay and softens the wax. The Zend-Avesta supplies a parallel. All, it is there said, in the world to come will have to pass through the same stream; but this stream will be as warm milk to the righteous, while to the wicked it will be as molten brass.

\* The true feeling is expressed by Augustine: *Hæreditas in quâ cohæredes Christi sumus, non minuitur multitudo filiorum, nec fit angustius numerositate cohæredum. Sed tanta est multis quanta paucis, tanta singulis quanta omnibus*; and in a sublime passage, *De Lib. Arbit.* ii. 14, where of Truth, the heavenly bride, he exclaims: *Ommes amatores suos nullo modo sibi invidios recipit, et omnibus communis est, et singulis casta est*: and by Gregory, who says: *Qui facibus invidiæ carere desiderat, illam caritatem appetat, quam numerus possidentium non angustat*. The same is beautifully expressed by Dante, *Purgat.* 15, beginning,

Com' esser puote ch' un ben distributo  
In più posseditor, faccia più ricchi  
Di se, che se da pochi è posseduto?

are here made in humility, in holiness, in love, are a polishing of the mirror that it may reflect more distinctly the divine image, a purging of the eye that it may see more clearly the divine glory, an enlarging of the vessel that it may receive more amply of the divine fulness; just as, on the other hand, all pride, all self-righteousness, all sin of every kind, whether it stop short with impairing, or end by altogether destroying, the capacities for receiving from God, is in its degree a staining of the mirror, a darkening of the eye, a narrowing of the vessel.\* In the present case, where pride and envy and self-esteem had found place, darkening the eye of the heart, the reward as a consequence seemed no reward; it did not appear enough;† instead of being exactly what each was willing, or rather had prepared himself, to make it.

*"But he answered one of them,"* probably him who was loudest and foremost in the expression of his discontent, *"and said, Friend,‡ I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny?"* "Friend" is commonly a word of address, as it would be among ourselves, from a superior to an inferior, and in Scripture is a word of an evil omen, seeing that, besides the present passage, it is the compellation used to the guest that had not on a wedding garment, and to Judas when he came to betray his Master (Matt. xxii. 12; xxvi. 50).—*"I do thee no wrong,"* he justifies his manner of dealing with them, as well as his sovereign right in his own things. They had put their claim on the footing of right, and on that footing they are answered. *"Take that thine is, and go thy way;"*

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\* Bellarmine (*De Æter. Felic. Sanct.* v.): Denarius vitam æternam significat: sed quemadmodum idem sol clarius conspicitur ab aquilâ quam ab aliis avibus, et idem ignis magis calefacit proximos quam remotos, sic in eâdem æternâ vitâ clarius videbit et jucundius gaudebit unus quam alius.

† As the heathen moralist had said: Nulli ad aliena respicienti, sua placent;—and again: Non potest quisquam et invidere et gratias agere.

‡ *Ἐταῖρος*: in the Vulgate, Amice; but Augustine (*Serm.* lxxxvii. 8), Sodalis, which is better. Our "fellow," as now used, would contain too much of contempt in it, though else it would give the original with the greatest accuracy.



and again, "*Is thine eye\* evil because I am good?* so long as I am just to thee, may I not be good and liberal to others?" The solution of the difficulty that these complainers should get their reward and carry it away with them, has been already suggested, namely that, according to the human relations on which the parable is founded, and to which it must adapt itself, it would not have been consistent with equity to have made them forfeit their own hire, notwithstanding the bad feeling which they displayed. Yet we may say their reward vanished in their hands; and the sentences which follow sufficiently indicate, that with God an absolute forfeiture might follow, nay, must necessarily follow, where this grudging, unloving, proud spirit has come to its full head; for it is said immediately after, "*So the last shall be first, and the first last.*"

Many expositors have been sorely troubled how to bring these words into agreement with the parable; for in it "*first*" and "*last*" seem all put upon the same footing: while, in these words, it is rather a *change* of place which is asserted; those who seemed highest, it is declared shall be placed at the lowest, and the lowest highest: when too we compare the one other passage where the words occur, Luke xiii. 30, there can be no doubt that a total rejection of the first, the unbelieving Jews, accompanied with the receiving of the last, the Gentiles, into covenant, is there declared. Origen, whom Maldonatus follows, finds an explanation in the fact that the "*last*" hired are the "*first*" in order of payment; but this is so trifling an advantage, that the explanation must be rejected as quite un-

\* Envy is ever spoken of as finding its expression from the eye, Deut. xv. 9; 1 Sam. xviii. 9 ("Saul eyed David"); Prov. xxiii. 6; xxviii. 22; Tob. iv. 7; Ecclus. xiv. 10; xxxi. 13; Mark vii. 22; indeed the word *invidia* says as much, being, as Cicero observes (*Tusc.* iii. 9), à nimis *intuendo* fortunam alterius. There lies in the expression the belief, one of the widest spread in the world, of the eye being able to put forth positive powers of mischief. Thus in Greek the ὀφθαλμός βάσκανος and βασκαίνειν = φθονεῖν; in Italian, the mal-occhio; in French, the mauvais-œil. Persius: *Urentes oculos*. See BECKER'S *Charikles*, vol. ii. p. 291. We have on the other hand the ἀγαθὸς ὀφθαλμός, the ungrudging eye (Ecclus. xxxii. 10, LXX.).

satisfactory. Moreover, the circumstance of the last hired being first paid is evidently introduced for the convenience of the narration; if the first hired had been first paid, and, as was natural, had then gone their way, they would not have seen that the others had obtained the same remuneration as themselves, and so would have had no temptation to express their discontent. Neander\* finds the difficulty of reconciling the parable with the words which introduce and finish it so great, that he proposes a desperate remedy, and one under the frequent application of which we should lose all confidence in the trustworthiness, not to speak of the inspiration, of the Gospel narrations. He thinks the sentences and the parable to have been spoken on different occasions, and only by accident to have been here brought into connexion; and asserts that one must wholly pervert this so weighty parable, to bring it through forced artifices into harmony with words which are alien to it. But what has been observed above may furnish a sufficient answer; if that be correct, the saying is not merely in its place here, but is absolutely necessary to complete the moral, to express that which the parable did not, and, according to the order of human affairs, could not express,—namely, the *entire* forfeiture which would follow on the indulgence of such a temper as that displayed by these murmurers and complainers.

There is more difficulty in the other words, “*for many be called, but few chosen.*”† They are not difficult in themselves, but difficult on account of the position which they occupy: the connexion is easy and the application obvious, when they occur as the moral of the Marriage of the King’s Son (Matt. xxii. 14); but here they have much perplexed interpreters, such, at least, as will not admit the entire rejection

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\* *Leben Jesu*, p. 196, note.

† It is not often that there is so felicitous an equivalent proverb in another language as that which the Greek supplies here; and which Clement of Alexandria has more than once adduced on the score of its aptness as a parallel:

Πολλοί τοι νυμφηκόφοροι, παῖροι δέ τε βάρηλοι.

from the heavenly kingdom of those represented by the murmuring labourers. Some explain them, Many are called, but few have the peculiar favour shown to them, that though their labour is so much less, their reward should be equal: thus Olshausen, who makes the "*called*" and the "*chosen*" alike partakers of final salvation, but assumes that by these terms are signified lower and higher standings of men in the kingdom of God.\* These last hired had, in his view, laboured more abundantly, but this their more abundant labour was to be referred to a divine election, so that the name "*chosen*" or elect well becomes them to whom such especial grace was given. But this supposition of larger labour upon their part mars, as has been already noted, the whole parable, and can by no means be admitted. Others have supposed that the "*called*" may refer to some not expressly mentioned in the parable, who had refused altogether to work in the vineyard; in comparison with whom the "*chosen*," those who at any hour had accepted the invitation, were so few, that the Lord could not bear that any of these should be shut out from his full reward. But the easiest interpretation seems to be: Many are called to work in God's vineyard, but few retain that temper of spirit, that humility, that entire submission to the righteousness of God, that utter denial of any claim as of right on their own part, which will allow them in the end to be partakers of his reward.†

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\* Thus Wolf also (*Curæ*, in loc.): Κλητούς et ἐκλεκτούς hic non tanquam specie sibi oppositos considerandos esse, sed tanquam oppositos gradu felicitatis atque dignitatis.

† The term *reward*, applied to the felicity which God will impart to his people, sometimes offends, seeming to bring back to a legal standing point, and to imply a claim, as of right, and not merely of grace, upon man's part. But being a scriptural term (Matt. v. 12, vi. 1; Luke vi. 35; 2 John 8; Rev. xxii. 12), there is no reason why we should shrink, and our Church has not shrunk, from its use; for we pray "that we, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously *rewarded*"—and in the Baptismal Service, "everlastingly *rewarded*." Only let us understand what we mean by it. Aquinas says: Potest homo apud Deum aliquid mereri non quidem secundum absolutam justitiæ rationem, sed secundum divinæ ordinationis quandam præsuppositionem; and this is a satisfactory distinction. The reward has relation to the work, but this is, as the early protesters against the

papal doctrine of merits expressed it, according to a *justitia promissionis divinæ*, not a *justitia retributionis*. There is nothing of a meritum condignum, though Bellarmine sought to press this parable into service in support of such (see GERHARD'S *Loc. Theol.* loc. xviii. 8, 114). When it is said, "God is *not unrighteous* to forget your work and labour of love," it is only saying in other words, "He is faithful," or promise-keeping (*ὅτι ἄδικος = πιστός*: cf. 1 John i. 9; 1 Cor. x. 13; 1 Pet. iv. 19). By free promise He makes himself a debtor: Augustine (*Serm.* cx. 4): Non debendo, sed promittendo, debitorem se Deus fecit. In the reward there is a certain retrospect to the work done, but no proportion between them, except such as may have been established by the free appointment of the Giver, and the only claim which it justifies is upon his promise. It is, as Fuller beautifully describes (*Holy State*, iii. 25), "a reward, in respect of his promise; a gift, in respect of thy worthlessness; and yet the less thou lookest on it, the surer thou shalt find it, if labouring with thyself to serve God for himself, in respect of whom even heaven itself is but a sinister end;" for, in the words of St. Bernard: *Vera caritas mercenaria non est, quamvis merces eam sequatur*. "He is faithful that promised"—this, and nothing else, must remain always the ground of all expectations; and what these expectations are to be, and what they are not to be, it is the main purpose of this parable to declare.

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## PARABLE X.

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### THE TWO SONS.

MATTHEW XXI. 28-32.

OUR Lord had put back with another question (ver. 24, 25) the question (ver. 23) with which his adversaries had hoped either to silence Him, if He should decline to answer; or to obtain matter of accusation against Him, if He should give the answer which they expected: and now He becomes Himself the assailing party, and commences that series of parables, in which, as in a glass held up before them, they might see themselves, the impurity of their hearts, their neglect of the charge laid upon them, their contempt of the privileges afforded them, the aggravated guilt of that outrage against Himself which they were already meditating in their hearts. Yet even these, wearing as they do so severe and threatening an aspect, are not words of defiance, but of earnest, tenderest love, spoken with the intention of turning them, if this were yet possible, from their purpose, of saving them from the fearful sin they were about to commit, of winning *them* also for the kingdom of God. The first, that of the Two Sons, goes not so deeply into the matter as the two that follow, and is rather retrospective, while those other are prophetic also.

*"But what think ye?—A certain man had two sons."* Here, as at Luke xv. 11, are described, under the image of two sons of one father, two great moral divisions of men, under one or other of which might be ranged almost all with whom our blessed Lord in his teaching and preaching came in contact. Of one of these classes the Pharisees were specimens and representatives, though this class as well as the other will exist at all times. In this are included all who have sought a righteousness through the law, and by help of it have been kept

in the main from open outbreakings of evil. In the second class, of which the publicans and harlots stand as representatives, are contained all who have thrown off the yoke, openly and boldly transgressed the laws of God, done evil as "with both hands earnestly." Now the condition of those first is of course far preferable; that righteousness of the law better than this open unrighteousness;—provided always that it is ready to give place to the righteousness of faith, when that appears; provided that it knows and feels its own incompleteness; and this will always be the case, where the attempt to keep the law has been truly and honestly made; the law will then have done its work, and have proved a schoolmaster to Christ. But if this righteousness is satisfied with itself,—and this will be, where evasions have been sought out to escape the strictness of the requirements of the law; if cold and loveless and proud, it imagines that it wants nothing, and so refuses to submit itself to the righteousness of faith; then far better that the sinner should have had his eyes opened to perceive his misery and guilt, even though it had been by means of manifest and grievous transgressions, than that he should remain in this ignorance of his true state, of all which is lacking to him still;—just as it would be better that disease, *if in the frame*, should take a decided shape, so that it might be felt and acknowledged to be disease, and then met and overcome, than that it should be secretly lurking in, and pervading, the whole system; and, because secretly, its very existence denied by him whose life it was threatening. From this point of view St. Paul speaks, Rom. vii. 7-9, and this same lesson, that there is no such fault as counting we have no fault, is taught us throughout all Scripture. It is taught us in the bearing of the elder son towards his father and returning brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son; and again, in the demeanour of the Pharisee who had invited Jesus to his house, toward him and toward the woman "which was a sinner;" and in that of another Pharisee, whose very prayers this spirit and temper made to be nothing worth (Luke xviii. 10; cf. v. 29-32).

*"And he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard."* This command was the general summons made both by the natural law in the conscience, and also by the revealed law which came by Moses, that men should bring forth fruit unto God. This call the publicans and harlots, and all open sinners, manifestly neglected and despised. The son first bidden to go to the work, *"answered and said, I will not."*\* The rudeness of the answer, the total absence of any attempt to excuse his disobedience, are both characteristic. The representative of careless, reckless sinners, he does not take the trouble to say, like those invited guests, "I pray thee have me excused;" but flatly refuses to go.—*"And he came to the second, and said likewise; and he answered and said, I go, sir."*† The Scribes and Pharisees, as professing to be zealous for the law, set themselves in the way as though they would fulfil the commands; this their profession was like the second son's promised obedience. But they said, and did not (Matt. xxiii. 2); the prophet Isaiah, as the Lord declares, had long since described them truly (Matt. xv. 8), "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;" and so was it here. When the marked time arrived, when it was needful to take decisively one side or the other, when the Baptist came to them *"in the way of righteousness,"* and summoned to earnest repentance, to a revival of God's work in the hearts of the entire people, then many of those hitherto openly profane were baptized, confessing their sins; and like the son who at first contumaciously refused obedience to his father's bidding, *"repented and went:"* while on the other hand, the real unrighteousness of the Pharisees, before concealed under show

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\* Gerhard: Vita peccatorum nihil aliud est, quam realis quidam clamor et professio, Nolumus facere Dei voluntatem.

† Ἐγὼ, κύριε. The readings here are very various, *ναὶ κύριε, ὑπάγω κύριε*, and many more, which, however, may be easily traced up to transcribers wanting to amend a phrase which they did not quite understand, and which seemed incomplete: *πορεύομαι, ἀπέρχομαι*, or some such word, must be supplied. See 1 Sam. iii. 4, 6; Gen. xxi. 1, lxx.

of zeal for the law, was evidently declared: professing willingness to go, they yet "*went not.*"

To the Lord's question, "*Whether of the twain did the will of his father?*" his adversaries cannot profess inability to reply, as they had done to a former question (ver. 27); they are obliged to answer, though their answer condemned themselves. "*They say unto him, The first:*"—not, of course, that he did it absolutely well, but by comparison with the other. Then follows the application to themselves of the words reluctantly wrung from them: "*Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*" In these words, "*they go before you,*" or "*take the lead of you,*" Christ would indicate that the door of hope was not yet shut upon them, that they were not yet by any irreversible doom excluded from that kingdom: the others indeed had preceded them; but they might still follow, if they would. An emphasis has been laid on the words, "*in the way of righteousness,*" as though they are brought in to aggravate the sin of the Pharisees, as though the Lord would say, "The Baptist came, a pattern of that very righteousness of the law, in which you profess to exercise yourselves. He did not come, calling to the new life of the Gospel, of which I am the pattern, and which you might have misunderstood; he did not come, seeking to put new wine into the old bottles, but himself fulfilling that very idea of righteousness which you pretended to have set before yourselves, that which consisted in strong and marked separation of himself from sinners, and in an earnest asceticism; and yet you were so little hearty in the matter, that for all this he obtained no more acceptance with you than I have done. You found fault with him for the strictness of his life, as you find fault with me for the condescension of mine (Matt. ii. 16, 19). Nor did you merely reject him at the first, but afterwards, when his preaching bore manifest proof in the conversion of sinners, when God had thus set his seal to it, when *the publicans and the harlots believed him*, even then he could not be provoked to jealousy; *ye when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*"



In many copies, and some not unimportant ones, it is the son that is first spoken to, who promises to go, and afterwards disobeys; and the second who, refusing first, afterwards changes his mind, and enters on the work. Probably the order was thus reversed by transcribers, who thought that the application of the parable must be to the successive callings of Jews and Gentiles,\* and that therefore the order of their calling should be preserved. But the parable does not primarily apply to the Jew and Gentile, but must be referred rather to the two bodies within the bosom of the Jewish people:—it is not said, “~~the~~ Gentiles,” but “*the publicans and the harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before you;*” while yet the first, if the parable had admitted (and if it had admitted, it would have required it), would have been a far stronger way of provoking them to jealousy (Rom. x. 21, 22). The application of the parable to Gentile and Jew need not indeed be excluded, since the whole Jewish nation stood to the Gentile world in the same relation which the more self-righteous among themselves did to notorious transgressors. But not till the next parable do Jew and Gentile, in their relations to one another, and in their respective relations to the kingdom of God, come distinctly and primarily forward.

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\* So Origen, Chrysostom, and Athanasius: Jerome too, who quotes as a parallel to “*I go, sir,*” the words of the children of Israel at the giving of the law, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exod. xxiv 7). The *Auct. Oper. Imperf.* is almost the only ancient author who interprets the parable rightly; noting at length the inconveniences that attend the application of it to Jew and Gentile. But the *ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ*, with which Origen introduces his erroneous explanation, marks that there was another interpretation current in the Church, as is explicitly stated by Jerome: *Alii non putant Gentilium et Judæorum esse parabolam, sed simpliciter peccatorum et iustorum.*

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## PARABLE XI.

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### *THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.*

MATTHEW **xxi.** 33-44; MARK **xii.** 1-12; LUKE **xx** 9-18.

THE Lord's hearers would have been well content if He had paused with that one parable which He had just spoken. But no; He will not let them go: He has begun and will finish: "*Hear another parable,*" as though He would say, "I have not done with you yet; I have still another word of warning and rebuke," and to that He now summons them to listen. There is this apparent difference between the accounts of the several Evangelists, that while St. Matthew and St. Mark relate the parable as addressed to the Pharisees, it was, according to St. Luke, spoken to the people. But the sacred narrative itself supplies the helps for clearing away this appearance of a discrepancy, St. Luke mentioning the chief priests and scribes (ver. 19) in a way which shows that they were listeners also; and thus, being spoken in the hearing of both parties, in the mind of one narrator the parable seemed addressed mainly to the people; in that of the others, to the Pharisees.

"*There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard.*" The image of the kingdom of God as a vine-stock,\* or as a vineyard,† is not peculiar to this parable, but runs through the whole Old Testament (Deut. xxxii. 32; Ps. lxxx.

\* The vine-stock often appears on the Maccabæan coins as the emblem of Palestine; sometimes too the bunch of grapes and the vine-leaf. Thus Deyling (*Obs. Sac.* vol. iii. p. 236): *Botrus præterea, folium vitis et palma, ut ex nummis apparet, symbolum erant Judææ.*

† St. Bernard draws out the comparison between the Church and the vineyard at some length (*In Cant. Serm.* 30): *In fide plantata, in caritate mittit radices, defossa sarculo disciplinæ, stercorata penitentium lacrymis, rigata prædicantium verbis, et sic sane exuberans vino, in quo est lætitia, sed non luxuria, vino totius suavitatis, nullius libi-*

8-16; Isai. v. 1-7; xxvii. 1-7; Jer. ii. 21; Ezek. xv. 1-6; xix. 10; Hos. x. 1); and has in many aspects its fitness. The vine, the lowest, was at the same time the noblest of earthly plants. To it our Lord compares Himself (John xv. 1), and in prophecy had been compared to it long before\* (Gen. xlix. 11). Pliny† has noticed the tendency of the vine to spread and diffuse itself almost without limit; with which we may connect the Psalmist's words (lxxx. 9), "It filled the land." Nor may we, while we are drawing out these points of similitude, leave unnoticed the fact, that no property was counted to yield so large a return (Cant. viii. 11, 12), none therefore was of such price and esteem; even as at the same time none required such unceasing care and attention.‡

The opening words of the parable at once suggest, and were meant by the divine speaker to suggest, a comparison with Isaiah v. 1-7. Our Lord takes up the prophet's words, the more willingly building on the old foundations, that his adversaries accused Him of destroying the law; and not in word only, but by the whole structure of the parable, He con-

dinis. Hoc certe vinum lætificat cor hominis, hoc constat et angelos bibere cum lætitiâ. Augustine also (*Serm. lxxxvii. 1*) Cultura ipsius est in nos, quod non cessat verbo suo extirpare semina mala de cordibus nostris, aperire cor nostrum tanquam aratro sermonis, plantare semina præceptorum, expectare fructum pietatis. Cf. Ambrose, *Exp. in Luc.* ix. 29.

\* Grotius: Glorietur vitis in fabulâ (Jud. ix. 13) suo liquore lætificari Deum et homines, quod de Christi sanguine verissime dicitur.

† *Hist. Nat.* xiv. 3.

‡ It no doubt belongs to the fitness of the image that a vineyard does, if it is to bring forth richly, require the *most* diligent and never-ceasing care, that there is no season in the year in which much has not to be done in it. Virgil presses this very strongly, in words not unworthy to be kept in mind by all to whom a spiritual vineyard has been committed, see *Georg.* ii. 397-419, beginning,

Est etiam ille labor curandis vitibus alter,  
Cui nunquam exhausti satis est: namque omne quotannis  
Terque quaterque solum scindendum, glebaque versis  
Æternum frangenda bidentibus; omne levandum  
Fronde nemus. Redit agricolis labor æctus in orbem,  
Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.

And so Cato: Nulla possessio pretiosior, nulla majorem operam requirit.

nects his own appearing with all that had gone before in the past Jewish history, so that men should look at it as part, indeed as the crowning and final act, of that great dealing of mercy and judgment which had ever been going forward. It would not be convenient to interpret the "*vineyard*" here as the Jewish Church, seeing that the vineyard is taken away from the Jews, and given to another nation; which it is evident could not be accurately said of the Jewish Church. In Isaiah, indeed, the vineyard and the Jewish Church are one, and that accordingly is described, not as transferred to others, but as laid waste and utterly destroyed, its hedge taken away, its wall broken down, all labour in pruning or digging withdrawn from it, and the heavens themselves commanded that they rain no rain on it any more. Here, where it is transferred to other and more faithful husbandmen, we must rather understand by it the kingdom of God in its idea, which idea Jew and Gentile have been successively placed in conditions to fulfil.\* Inasmuch indeed as Israel according to the flesh was the first occupier of the vineyard, it might be said that the vineyard at that time was the Jewish Church; but this arrangement was only accidental and temporary, and not of necessity, as the sequel abundantly proved. The Jews were not identified with the kingdom of God; to them indeed it was first given to realize that kingdom, as to these husbandmen the vineyard was first committed; but failure in each case involved forfeiture of all privileges and advantages, with their transfer to others.

The householder was more than the possessor of this vineyard. he had himself "*planted*" it (Exod. xv. 17). The planting of the spiritual vineyard found place under Moses and Joshua, in the establishing of the Jewish polity in the land of Canaan; and is described Deut. xxxii. 12-14: cf. Ezek. xvi. 9-14; Neh. ix. 23-25. But when it is said further that he "*hedged it round about,† and digged a wine-*

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\* Origen (*Comm. in Matt.* in loc.) draws out clearly and well the differences that exist in this regard between the parable in Isaiah and that recorded by the Evangelists.

† Mr. Greswell's observation (*Exp. of the Par.* vol. v. p. 4), that

*press in it, and built a tower,"* shall we, it may be asked, attach any peculiar signification to these several details?—or accept them merely as general expressions of that ample provision of all means of grace and helps to a godly life, with which the chosen people were so abundantly supplied? Storr, as usual, will see in them nothing beyond a general expression of God's provident care for his Church: "what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isai. v. 4). But whatever may be said of the other matters, with Ephes. ii. 14 before us, where the law is described as "the middle wall of partition"\* between the Jew and Gentile, it is difficult not to attach to the hedging round of the vineyard its own meaning. By their circumscription through the law, the Jews became a people dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations (Num. xxiii. 9). The law was a hedge at once of separation, and also of defence,† since in keeping distinct the line of separation between themselves and the idolatrous nations around them, lay their security that they should enjoy the continued protection of God.

this fence (*φραγμός*) is rather a stone wall than a hedge of thorns or of other *quickset*, I should suppose correct—see Num. xxii. 24; Prov. xxiv. 31; Isaiah v. 5, though in that last passage the vineyard appears to have been provided with both. Yet one of his grounds for this seems questionable—namely, that the incursions of the enemies which threatened the vineyard, the foxes (Cant. ii. 15) and the wild boar (Ps. lxxx 13), were not to be effectually repelled except by fences made of stone; see Neh. iv. 3: and Virgil (*Georg.* ii. 371), while he is on the very subject of the extreme injury which one animal and another—(*durique venenum Dentis et adorso signata in stirpe cicatrix*)—may inflict upon the vines, enjoins not the building of stone walls, but a careful keeping of the hedges as the adequate measure of defence.—*Texendæ sepes etiam.* The thorn fences, especially if formed, as is common in the East, of the wild aloe, would be far more effectual for this than any wall of stone. See also HOMER, *Il.* xviii. 564. The word itself, *φραγμός*, determines nothing, as the fundamental meaning of *φράσσω* is to surround or enclose (Passow: *umgeben, einschliessen*), without itself determining in the least how the enclosure shall be effected.

\* *Μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ* there, as *φραγμός* here.

† Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* ix. 24) explains it: *Divinæ custodiæ munitione vallavit, ne facile spiritualium pateret incursibus bestiarum*; and *Hexaem.* iii. 12: *Circumdedit eam velut vallo quodam cælestium præceptorum, et angelorum custodiâ.*

That protection is called "a wall of fire" (Zech. ii. 5: cf. Ps. cxxv. 2; Isai. xxvi. 1; xxvii. 3). Nor is it unworthy of observation that outwardly also Judæa, through its geographical position, was hedged round, by the bounty of nature on every side circumscribed and defended; being guarded on the east by the river Jordan and the two lakes, on the south by the desert and mountainous country of Idumæa, on the west by the sea, and by Anti-Libanus on the north: for so, observes Vitranga, had God in his counsels determined, who willed that Israel should dwell alone.

It may be said that the wine-press\* and the tower† would

\* *Ληρός*=torcular, in St. Mark *ὑπολήριον*=lacus; a part being in each case put for the whole; the digging can be applied strictly only to the latter, which was often hollowed out of the earth and then lined with masonry, as Chardin mentions that he found them in Persia; sometimes they were hewn out of the solid rock. Nonnus (*Dionys.* xii 330) describes in some spirited lines, how Bacchus hollowed out such a receptacle from thence. In the *ληρός*, or press above, the grapes were placed, and were there crushed, commonly by the feet of men (Judg. ix. 27; Neh. xiii 15; Isai. lxiii 3); at the bottom of this press was a closely-grated hole, through which the juice, being expressed, ran into the *ὑπολήριον* (or *προλήριον*, Isai. v. 3, lxx), the vat prepared beneath for its reception, the lacus vinarius of Columella.

† It may be this *πύργος* was the villa where at once the fruits were kept and the husbandmen resided; but I should rather suppose it the tower of the watchmen. I have seen in Spain temporary towers erected for them, at the season when the grapes, approaching to ripeness, might tempt the passers-by, which were there the more necessary, as often the vineyard lay open to the road without any protection whatever. A scaffolding was raised to a considerable height with planks and poles, and matting above to defend from the heat of the sun; and on the scaffolding, which commanded an extensive view all around, a watcher, with a long gun, was planted. This tower is the *ὄπωροφυλάκιον* of Isai. i 8, xxiv. 20, which Jerome explains: *Specula quam custodes satorum habere consueverunt*. The elder Niebuhr (*Beschreib. v. Arab.* p. 138) says: "In the mountainous district of Yemen I saw here and there as it were nests in the trees, in which the Arabs perched themselves to watch their corn-fields. In Tehama, where the trees were scarcer, they built for this purpose a high and light scaffold." Ward (*View of the Hindoos*, vol. ii. p. 327, quoted by Burder) observes: "The wild hogs and buffaloes [*silvestres uri*, *Georg.* ii. 374] make sad havoc in the fields and orchards of the Hindoos; to keep them out, men are placed on elevated covered stages in the fields;"—sometimes, as a friend has told me, on mounds built with sods of earth; and the watchers are frequently armed with slings, which they use with great dexterity and effect, to drive away invaders of every description.

both be needful for the completeness of a vineyard; the latter not being merely the ornamental building, the kiosk which belongs to the perfection of an Eastern garden, and serves mainly for delight, but here serving for use as well, a place of shelter for the watchmen who should protect the fruits of the vineyard, and perhaps a receptacle for the fruits themselves; and this fact may sufficiently explain their mention here. Certainly it is not easy to point out distinct spiritual benefits severally shadowed forth by these, or to affirm that more is meant than generally that God provided his people with all things necessary for life and godliness, and furnished them with fixed channels and reservoirs of his blessings. All attempts to define more closely what this "tower" and this "wine-press"\* intend, appear fanciful, and though often ingenious, yet no one of them such as to command unreserved assent.†

Having thus richly supplied his vineyard with all things needful, he "*let it out to husbandmen*;" it is not said on what terms, although no doubt there was a covenant betwixt him and them, concerning the proportion of the fruits which they should yield him in their season. Since the husbandmen must be different from the vineyard which they were to cultivate, they can be no other than the spiritual leaders and teachers of

\* Generally the wine-press is taken to signify the prophetic institution. Thus Irenæus (*Con Her.* iv 36): Torcular fodit, receptaculum prophetici Spiritûs præparavit. Hilary (*in Matt*): In quos [prophetas] musti modo quædam ubertas Spiritûs Sancti ferventis influeret. So Ambrose, *Exp in Luc.* ix. 24.

† In the parallel passage in Isaiah two other principal benefits are recorded,—that the vineyard was on a fruitful hill (apertos Bacchus amat colles, VIRGIL), sloping towards the rays of the sun, and that the stones were gathered out from it (2 Kin. iii. 19), the last with allusion to the casting out of the Canaanites, that else might have proved stumbling-blocks for God's people (Ps. cxxv. 3). With the whole parable Ezek. xvi. will form an instructive parallel. There too in the same manner, although under altogether a different image, the Lord upbraids the ingratitude of his people with the enumeration of the rich provision which He had made for them. With this description of the ample furniture of the vineyard might be compared ver. 10-12 of that chapter, for they too in like manner are employed in describing what God did for his people at their coming out of Egypt.

the people, while the vineyard itself will then naturally signify the great body of the people, who were to be instructed and taught, to the end that, under watchful care and tendance, they might bring forth fruits of righteousness.\* The vineyard was let out to those in the solemn committal made in the law, of such a charge to the priests and Levites; a committal recognized and pressed in such passages as Mal. ii. 7; Ezek. xxxiv. 2. This done, the householder "*went into a far country,*" and, as St. Luke adds, "*for a long while.*" At Sinai, when the theocratic constitution was founded, and in the miracles which accompanied the deliverance from Egypt and the bringing into Canaan, the Lord may be said to have openly manifested Himself to Israel; but then to have withdrawn Himself again for a while, not speaking to the people again face to face (Deut. xxxiv. 10-12), but waiting in patience to see what the Law would effect, and what manner of works the people, under the teaching of their spiritual guides, would bring forth.†

"*And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.*" How, it may be asked, are these "*servants*" to be distinguished from the husbandmen? Exactly in this, that the servants, that is, the prophets and other more eminent ministers of God in his theocracy, *were sent*, being raised up at particular times, having particular missions, and their power

\* A friend who kindly looked over the notes on some of these parables before publication has added a note, which I am sure every reader will be glad I have preserved; he says: "I do not absolutely question the truth of this interpretation, but it seems to me rather an escape from a difficulty which does not exist more in the parable than in all our customary language about the Church. The Church is both *teacher* and *taught*; but the teachers are not merely the ministers. the whole Church of one generation teaches the whole Church of another, by its history, acts, words, mistakes, &c. The Church existing out of time an unchangeable body teaches the members of the Church existing in every particular time."

† Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc. ix. 23*): "Multis temporibus abfuit, ne præproperea videretur exactio: nam quo indulgentior liberalitas, eo inexcusabilior pervicacia. Theophylact: ἡ ἀποδημία τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ μακροθυμία. Bengel: Innuitur tempus divinæ taciturnitatis, ubi homines agunt pro arbitrio. See Ezek. viii. 12, Ps. x. 5.



lying in their mission; while the others were the more regular and permanently established ecclesiastical authorities, whose power lay in the very constitution of the theocracy itself.\* The servants were sent to receive "*of the fruit of the vineyard,*"† the householder's share of the produce, whatever that might have been—the rent not being to be paid in money, but in a fixed proportion of the produce. Olshausen says here, "These fruits which are demanded, are in nowise to be explained as particular works, nor yet as a condition of honesty and uprightness, but much rather as the repentance and the inward longing after true inward righteousness, which the law was unable to bring about. It is by no means meant to be said that the law had not an influence in producing uprightness: it cuts off the grosser manifestations of sin, and reveals its hidden abomination; so that a righteousness according to the law can even under the law come forth as fruit, but this, to be sufficing, must have a sense of the need of a redemption for its basis (Rom. iii. 20). The servants therefore here appear

\* Bengel: *Servi sunt ministri extraordinarii, majores: agricolæ, ordinarii.*

† *Ἀπὸ τοῦ καρποῦ*—according to the well-known *metayer* system once prevalent over great part of Europe, and still known in parts of France and in Italy; the two parties would in Latin be styled *partiarum*. Pliny (*Ep.* ix. 37) mentions of some of his estates which had hitherto been very badly managed, that the only way in which he could get any thing from them was by letting them on this system. *Medendi una ratio si non nummo sed partibus locem*: He was to appoint some guardians (*exactores* and *custodes*) to secure his portion of the produce—differing it is probable only from these servants, that they were to be permanently on the spot, to prevent fraud, and to see that he obtained his just share. Chardin (*Voy. en Perse*, vol. v. p. 384, Langlès' ed.) gives much information on the terms upon which these arrangements are commonly made in Persia, and proceeds, showing how something like the dishonest and violent breaking of the agreement which is supposed in the parable might be of frequent occurrence: *Cet accord, qui paroît un marché de bonne foi et qui le devoit être, se trouve néanmoins une source intarissable de fraude, de contestation, et de violence, où la justice n'est presque jamais gardée, et ce qu'il y a de fort singulier c'est que le seigneur est celui qui a toujours du pire, et qui est lésé.* He then enters into details of some of these frauds and violences, of which, it is true, none reach the pitch which is here supposed. See DU CANGE, s. vv. *Medietarius* and *Medietas*.

as those who seek for these spiritual needs, that they may link to them the promises concerning a coming Redeemer: but the unfaithful husbandmen who had abused their own position, denied and slew these messengers of grace."

The conduct of the wicked husbandmen toward their lord's servants is detailed with more particularity in the two later Gospels than in the first. In St. Luke the gradual growth of the outrage under the sense of impunity is distinctly traced. When the first servant came, they "*beat him, and sent him away empty.*" The next they "*entreated shamefully;*" or according to St. Mark, who defines the very nature of the outrage, "*at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head,\* and sent him away shamefully handled.*" The words in the original† would seem to indicate, that in their wanton insolence and pride they further devised some insulting outrages, not expressly named, against this servant, whereby they might the more plainly testify their scorn of the master—some outrage, perhaps, like Hanun's, when he "took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, and sent them away" (2 Sam. x. 4).

\* St. Mark has here (xii. 4) a singular use of the word κεφαλαίω, as to wound in the head, while yet it is never elsewhere used but as to gather up in one sum, as under one head; of which its correcter use we have a good example in the epistle of Barnabas, c. v., which, as bearing in another aspect upon this present parable, may be quoted. It is there said that the Son of God came in the flesh, ἵνα τὸ τέλειον τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν κεφαλαίωσιν τοῖς διώξασιν ἐν θανάτῳ τοὺς προφῆτας αὐτοῦ. Passow seems hardly accurate when he says, s. v., with allusion, as is evident, to this passage, Κεφαλαίω in N. T. = κεφαλίζω, tödten. For it is clear it does not mean to decapitate, or wound mortally on the head, since they sent him away on whom they inflicted this injury. We have analogies in γαστρίζω, to strike on the stomach, γναθῶ, on the cheek; see Lobeck, *Phrynichus*, p. 95. The notion of Wakefield (*Silv. Crit.* ii. p. 76), that here also it is, breviter vel summatim egerunt, they made short work of it, or as Lightfoot expresses it, alluding to the circumstance that the servant came to demand payment,—they reckoned with him, they squared accounts with him (ironically), is quite untenable. The accusative αὐτόν is decisive against it, as against Theophylact's anticipation of this explanation: Συνετέλεσαν καὶ ἐκορύφωσαν τὴν ὕβριν.

† Ἀπέστειλαν ἡττωμένον, or perhaps more probably ἡττήσαν, as the best texts have it.

The third they wounded, and cast out of the vineyard with violence; flung him forth, it might be, with hardly any life in him. In the two first Evangelists the outrage reaches even to the killing of some of the subordinate messengers; in St. Luke's narration it is perhaps preferable, that this crowning outrage is reserved for the son himself; though on the other hand it might be urged that some of the prophets were not merely maltreated, but actually put to death. Thus, if we may trust Jewish tradition, Jeremiah was stoned by the exiles in Egypt, Isaiah sawn asunder by king Manasseh; and for an ample historical justification of this description, see Jer. xxxvii. 38; 1 Kin. xviii. 13; xxii. 24-27; 2 Kin. vi. 31; xxi. 16; 2 Chron. xxiv. 19-22; xxxvi. 16; and also Acts vii. 52; 1 Thess. ii. 15; and the whole passage finds a parallel in the words of the Apostle: "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; . . . of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. xi.).

The patience of the householder under these extraordinary provocations is wonderful, sending as he does messenger after messenger to bring back these wicked men to a sense of duty, and not at once resuming possession of his vineyard, and inflicting summary vengeance, as the end proves that he had power to do, upon them. This his patience is thus brought out and magnified, that it may set forth the yet more wonderful forbearance and long-suffering of God: "Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate" (Jer. xlv. 4). "Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets who testified against them, to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations" (Neh. ix. 26). The whole confession made in that chapter by the Levites is in itself an admirable commentary on this parable.

*"But last of all he sent unto them his son,"* or in the still

more affecting words of St. Mark (ver. 6), "*Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.*" When the householder expresses his conviction, that however those evil men may have outraged his inferior messengers, they will stand in awe of and reverence his son, it needs not to make a difficulty here, as some have done, from the fact that He whom the householder represents must have fully known from the beginning what treatment *his* Son would receive from those to whom He was sent. I do not mean that there is not a difficulty here, but it is the same which runs through every thing, that of the relations in which man's freedom and God's foreknowledge stand to one another;\* and it does not, in truth, come out more strongly here than it does everywhere else, and therefore requires not to be especially treated of in this place. This was the last and crowning effort of divine mercy, after which on the one side all the resources even of heavenly love were exhausted, and in the rejection of which on the other the measure of sins was perfectly filled up. The description of this last of the ambassadors as the householder's son, as his only one, his well-beloved, all this marks as strongly as possible the difference of rank between Christ and the prophets, the worth and dignity of *his* person who only was a Son in the highest sense of the word† (Heb. iii. 5, 6); and undoubtedly they who were our Lord's hearers quite understood what He meant, and the honour which in these words He claimed as his own, though they were unable to turn his words against Himself, and to accuse Him on the strength of them, of making Himself, as indeed He did, the Son of God.

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\* Jerome: Quod autem dicit, Verebuntur forte filium meum, non de ignorantia dicitur, Quid enim nesciat paterfamilias, qui hoc loco Deus intelligitur? Sed semper ambigere Deus dicitur, ut libera voluntas homini reservetur Cf. AMBROSE, *De Fide*, v. 17, 18

† This is often urged by early Church writers, when proving the divinity of the Son; as by Ambrose (*De Fide*, v. 7): Vide quia ante servos, postea filium nominavit; ut scias quod Deus Filius unigenitus secundum divinitatis potentiam nec nomen habet, nec consortium commune cum servis. Cf. IRENEUS, *Con. Hær.* iv. 30, 1.

*"But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance."* Compare John xi. 47-53, and the counsels of Joseph's brethren against him; "When they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him, and they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore let us slay him, . . . and we shall see what will become of his dreams" (Gen. xxxvii. 19). As they, thinking to defeat the purpose of God concerning their younger brother, help to bring it to pass, so the Jewish rulers were the instruments to fulfil that purpose of God concerning Christ, which they meant to bring to nothing\* (Acts iii. 18; iv. 27, 28).—"This is the heir;" he for whom the inheritance is meant, and to whom it will in due course rightfully arrive—not, as in earthly relations, by the death, but by the free appointment, of the actual possessor. For it is evident that "*heir*" is not here used, which it often laxly is, as a synonym for lord;† but the idea of one who is not in present possession of a good, but hereafter is coming to it, must be held fast (Phil. ii. 9-11). Christ is "*heir of all things*" (Heb. i. 2), not as He is the Son of God, for the Church has always detected Arian tendencies lurking in that interpretation, but as He is the Son of man. So Theodoret: "The Lord Christ is heir of all things, not as God, but as man; for as God He is maker of all."

It is the heart which speaks in God's hearing; the thought of men's heart is their true speech, and therefore it is here recounted as the utterance of their lips;—the husbandmen are described as *saying*, "*Come, let us kill him;*" not that we are to imagine that the Pharisees, even in their secretest counsels ever trusted one another so far, or dared to look their own wickedness so directly in the face, as to say, in as many words, "*This is the Messiah, therefore let us slay Him.*" But they desired the inheritance should be theirs, they desired that what

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\* Augustine: Ut possiderent, occiderunt, et quia occiderunt, perdidierunt.

† Just as in Latin oftentimes hæres = dominus.

God had intended should only be transient and temporary, enduring till the times of reformation, should be made permanent,—and this, because they had prerogatives and privileges under the imperfect system, which would cease when the more perfect scheme was brought in, or rather which, not ceasing, would yet be transformed into other and higher privileges, for which they had no care. The great master-builder was about to take down the temporary scaffolding which had now served its end; and this his purpose they the under-builders were setting themselves to resist,\* and were determined, at whatever cost, to resist to the uttermost.—And further, may we not see in this thought of killing the heir, and seizing on the inheritance and making it their own, an allusion to the principle of all self-righteousness, which is a seizing on the divine inheritance, a seeking to comprehend and take down into self that light, which is only light while it is recognized as something above self, and whereof man is permitted to be a partaker, but which he neither himself originated, nor yet can ever possess in fee, or as his own, or otherwise than as a continual receiver of it from on high; a light too, which, by the very success of the attempt to take it into his own possession, is as inevitably lost and extinguished, as would be a ray of our natural light if we succeeded in cutting it off from its luminous source—a truth of which angels and men have made mournful experience.

*“And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.”* All three narrators describe the son as thus *“cast out of the vineyard,”* by which we are reminded of Him who “suffered without the gate” (Heb. xiii. 12, 13; John xix. 17). By that, as in the Pentateuch by the exclusion from the camp, was signified the cutting off from the people of God, and from all share in their blessings. Thus when Naboth

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\* Hilary: Consilium colonorum et hæreditatis occiso hæredo præsumptio, spes inanis est gloriam Legis perempto Christo posse retineri. Grotius: His verbis ostenditur sacerdotes et principes Judæi populi hoc egisse summo studio ut Divinam Legem cogerent ambitioni suæ et quæstui inservire.

perished on charges of blasphemy against God and the king, that is, for theocratic sins, "they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died"\* (1 Kin. xxi. 18). In St. Mark it would rather seem that having slain the son first, they afterwards cast out the body; they denied it the common rites of sepulture; they flung it forth to show what they had done, and as much as to say, *that* was their answer to the householder's demands.

Having brought the tale of these husbandmen's guilt to a conclusion, and prophesied to the Jewish rulers the wickedness which in a few days they should accomplish,† Christ proceeds to ask, "*When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?*" It is very observable how the successive generations, who for so many centuries had been filling up the measure of the iniquity of Israel, are considered, throughout the entire parable, but as one body of husbandmen. And this, because God's truth is everywhere opposed to that shallow nominalism which would make such a word as "nation" a dead abstraction, a mere convenient help to the understanding. God will deal with nations as indeed *being* one, with a living unity in themselves, as in fact *bodies*, and not as though the word *nation* were a mere convenience of language to express a certain aggregation of individuals. Unless this were so, all confession of our fathers' sins would be mere mockery, and such passages as Matt. xxiii. 32-35, without any meaning at all. This is one of the many

\* The act of Naboth dying for his vineyard has been often adduced as a prophecy, not by word, but by deed, of the death of Christ and the purpose of that death. Thus, Ambrose addresses the vineyard of the Lord, the Church which He has purchased with his own blood (*Exp. in Luc. ix. 38*): *Salve vinea tanto digna custode: te non unius Nabuthæ sanguis, sed innumerabilium prophetarum et (quod est amplius) pretiosus cruor Domini consecravit. Ille . . . temporalem vineam defendebat, te vero in perpetuum multorum nobis martyrum plantavit interitus, te crux apostolorum æmula Dominicæ passionis usque in orbis totius terminos propagavit.*

† We have a remarkable example of a like prophesying to men their wickedness, as a last endeavour to turn them away from that wickedness, in Elisha's prophecy to Hazael (2 Kin. viii. 12-15).

ways in which God encounters our selfish, self-isolating tendencies; and while there is an abundant blessing in this law of his government, supplying as it does new motives and incentives to good, so is there no hardship or injustice in it. For while there is a life of the whole, there is also a life of each part; and thus it ever remains possible for each individual even of that generation, which, having filled up the last drop of the measure, is being chastised for all its own and its fathers' iniquities, by personal faith and repentance to withdraw himself, not indeed always from sharing in the outward calamity (though often there will be an ark when a world perishes, a Pella when Jerusalem is destroyed), but always from that which really constitutes the calamity,—the wrath of God, of which the outward visitation is but the form and expression.

The necessity of preserving the due probabilities of the narrative renders it, of course, impossible that it should be the son through whom the final vengeance is executed on these thankless and wicked husbandmen; he is slain, and cannot, like Him whom he shadows forth, rise again to take just vengeance on his murderers. This "*the lord of the vineyard,*" that is, the Father, must do: neither is there anything here not easily reconcilable to the general doctrine of Scripture, for it is the Father, revealing Himself in the Son, who both gave the law at Sinai, and will also, at the end of the world, return to take vengeance on all that obey not the Gospel. In the question itself, "*When the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?*" Christ makes the same appeal to his hearers, compelling them to condemn themselves out of their own mouths, which Isaiah (v. 3) had done before.\* Perhaps the Pharisees, to whom He addressed

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\* Vitringa there observes: Tam enim liquidum est Dei jus, ut si homo exuto affectu in tertio simili contempletur quod sui amore excæcatus in se videre non vult, per conscientiam obligatur ad agnoscendam causæ divinæ justitiam. Imo neminem Deus damnat, nisi quem sua condemnet conscientia. Habet enim Deus in omni homine suum tribunal, sui sedem judicii, et per hominem de homine judicat.



Himself, had as yet missed the scope of the parable, answering as they did, "*He will miserably destroy those wicked men,\* and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen,*" and so, before they were aware, pronounced sentence against themselves; or it may be that they as yet pretended not to perceive its drift, and therefore rendered necessary the still more explicit words (ver. 42-44), which it was impossible any longer to affect to misunderstand: "*Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" Then at length Christ and his adversaries stood face to face, as did once before a prophet and a wicked king of Israel, when the prophet, having obtained in his disguise a sentence from the lips of the king against himself, removed the ashes from his face, and the king "discerned him that he was of the prophets," and understood that he had unconsciously pronounced his own doom (1 Kin. xx. 41).†—The "*God forbid,*" which, according to St. Luke, the people uttered, when they heard the terrible doom of the husbandmen, gives evidence that the scope of the parable had

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\* Κακούς κακῶς, a proverbial expression, and one, as Grotius observes, petita ex purissimo sermone Græco, cf. Winer's *Grammatik*, lxii. I. p. 602. This parallel, a parallel in much more than those two words, may suffice in place of many that might be adduced:

Τοιγάρ σφ' Ὀλύμπου τοῦδ' ὁ πρεσβέων πατήρ,  
Μνήμων τ' Ἐριννύς, καὶ τελεσφόρος Δίκη  
Κακοὺς κακῶς φθείρειαν, ὥσπερ ἤθελον  
Τὸν ἄνδρα λώβαις ἐκβαλεῖν ἀναξίως.

SOPHOCLES, *Ajax*, 1389.

Our version has not attempted to preserve the paronomasia, which for evident reasons is far from being easy. The same difficulty attends the double φθείρειν at 1 Cor. iii. 17, for which our version has equally failed to give an equivalent. Similar idioms are not unfrequent in Greek. Thus λαμπρὸς λαμπρῶς, μεγάλοι μεγάλως, καθαρὰ καθαρῶς, σεμνὸς σεμνῶς, καλὸν καλῶς (Lobeck, *Paralipomena*, p. 68); and in Latin pessimum pessime.—How remarkable in connection with this passage are those words of Josephus (*B. J.* iv. 5, 2), in which he asserts his conviction that the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem might be traced up to the murder of one man, Ananias the high priest: he only errs in the person whom he names.

† Compare the rules which Cicero (*De Invent.* i. 32) gives for this bringing of an adversary unconsciously to convict himself.

not escaped *their* comprehension, that they had understood it, even before its plain interpretation at the last. The Pharisees had too much wariness and self-command to have allowed such an exclamation to have escaped from them. The exclamation itself was either an expression of fear, desiring that such evil might be averted; or else of unbelief, "That shall never be, it is impossible that our privileges can ever be so forfeited:" more probably this latter, from the spirit and temper of those who give it utterance.

This truth, so strange and unwelcome to his hearers, the Lord confirms by a prophecy from the Old Testament, which showed plainly that such a turn of things had been contemplated long before in the counsels of God: "*Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?*" The quotation is from Ps. cxviii. 22, 23, a psalm which the Jews recognized as applying to Messiah, and of which there is a like application at Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7; and an allusion somewhat more remote, Ephes. ii. 20.\* The passage quoted forms an exact parallel with this parable. "*The builders*" there correspond to "*the husbandmen*" here; those were appointed of God to carry up the spiritual temple, as these to cultivate the spiritual vineyard. The rejection of the chief corner-stone answers exactly to the denying and murdering of the heir. The motive which induces our Lord to abandon for a moment the image of the vineyard, is because of its inadequacy to set forth one important part of the truth, which yet was needful to make the moral complete, namely this, that the malice of the Pharisees should not defeat the purpose of God, that the Son

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\* The ἀκρογωνιαίος there = λίθος εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας here; the headstone of Zech. iv. 7. Aquila: ὁ λίθος ὁ πρωτεύων (see 1 Kin v. 17). It was a favourite view of the early Fathers that Christ was called the corner-stone because He united the Jew and the Gentile, making both one; thus Augustine, in almost numberless places,—for instance (*Serm. lxxxviii* 11): Angulus duos parietes copulat de diverso venientes. Quid tam diversum, quam circumcisio et præputium, habens unum parietem de Judæâ, alterum parietem de gentibus? sed angulari lapide copulantur.

should yet be the heir; and that not merely vengeance should be taken, but that He should take it. Now this is distinctly brought out in the rejected stone becoming the head of the corner, on which the builders should stumble and fall and be broken;\*—on which they were now already thus stumbling and falling, and which, if they set themselves against it to the end, would fall upon them, and utterly destroy them.† *They* fall on the stone, who are offended at Christ in his low estate (Isai. viii. 14; Luke ii. 34); of this sin his hearers were already guilty. There was yet a worse sin which they were on the point of committing, which He warns them would be followed with a more tremendous punishment: they on whom the stone falls are those who set themselves in distinct and self-conscious opposition against the Lord; who, knowing who He is, do yet to the end oppose themselves to Him and to his kingdom;‡ and *they* shall not merely fall and be broken, for one might recover himself, though with some present harm, from such a fall as this; but on them the stone shall fall and shall grind§ them to powder,—in the words of Daniel (ii. 35), “like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors,”—destroying and crushing them for ever.||

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\* Cajetan: Plus subjungit quam parabola pateretur: parabola enim usque ad vindictam duxit; sed hæc additione suppletur, quod occisio filii non privavit filium hæreditate: hoc enim significat adjuncta prophetia de Messia sub metaphora lapidis.

† Lachmann marks ver. 44 in Matthew as an interpolation, brought in from St. Luke; and it certainly seems out of its place, as one would have naturally looked for it after ver. 42.

‡ So Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* iii. 7), and Augustine: Christus verus lapis in hoc seculo quasi terræ infixus jacet, in judicio vero futuro quasi ex summo veniet, impios conteret: hoc dictum est de lapide illo, Qui offenderit in lapidem illum, conquassabit eum; super quem venerit, conteret eum: aliud est conquassari, aliud conteri: conquassari minus est quam conteri.

§ Δικμήσει, from λικμός (=πύλον, Matt. iii. 12), the fan with which the chaff, which in the act of threshing had been crushed and broken into minute fragments, is scattered and driven away upon the wind (Isai. xli. 2, 16, 16). In the N. T. it occurs only here; in the parallel passage, Dan. ii. 44, λικμήσει πάσας τὰς βασιλείας.

|| H. de Sto. Victore makes the following application of the parable to every man (*Annot. in Luc.*): Secundum moralem sensum vinea locatur, cum mysterium baptismi fidelibus ad exercendum opere com-

All three Evangelists notice the exasperation of the chief priests and scribes, when they perceived, as all did at last, though some sooner than others, that the parable was spoken against *them*. They no longer kept any terms with the Lord, and, had they not feared the people, would have laid violent hands on Him at once. Yet not even so did He give them up; but as He had, in this parable, set forth their relation to God as a relation of *duty*, as He had shown them how a *charge* was laid upon them, which they incurred the greatest guilt and the most fearful danger in neglecting to fulfil, so in the parable which He next spake, in that of the Marriage of the King's Son, He sets it forth in a yet more inviting light as a relation of *privilege*. He presents to them their work not any more as a task and burden laid upon them, but as a grace and boon freely imparted to them;—which therefore they incurred an equal danger and guilt, or indeed a greater, in counting light of or despising.

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mittitur. Mittuntur tres servi ut de fructu accipiant, cum Lex, Psalmodia, Prophetia, ad bene agendum hortatur: sed contumelus affecti, vel cæsi ejiciuntur, cum sermo auditus vel contemnitur, vel blasphemat. Missum insuper hæredem occidit, qui filium Dei contemnit, et Spiritui, quo sanctificatus est, contumeliam facit. Vineam alteri datur, cum gratiâ, quam superbus abjicit, humilis datur.

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## PARABLE XII.

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### *THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.\**

MATTHEW xxii. 1-14.

THIS parable, and that which is found at Luke xiv. 16, are not to be confounded with one another,† as if they were only two different versions of the same discourse. It is true that the same image, that of an invitation to a festival, lies at the root of both; yet were they plainly spoken on very different occasions,—that at a meal, this in the temple,—and that too, at a much earlier period of our Lord's ministry than this. For then the hostility of the Pharisaic party had not yet openly declared itself, nor indeed reached that pitch to which it afterwards arrived; on the contrary, one of the chief Pharisees, on the very occasion when the other parable was spoken, had invited the Saviour to eat bread with him (Luke xiv. 1). But when this parable was spoken, their enmity had already attained to the highest point, even to the formal determination of making away with Christ by violent means (John xi. 47-53). Then there was yet hope that they might, perhaps, be won over to obedience to the truth; now they are fixed in their rejection of the counsel of God, and in their hatred of his Christ. And consistently with the dif-

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\* This title, which is the one given to the parable in the heading of the chapter in our version, seems preferable to that by which it is sometimes called—namely, The Wedding Garment; for then the name is given, not from the main circumstance of the narrative, but from that which is but an episode in it: and the other title, The Marriage of the King's Son, quite as effectually distinguishes the present parable from that of The Great Supper in St. Luke.

† See Augustine, *De Cons. Evang.* ii. 71; Gregory the Great, *Hom. 38 in Evang.*; yet, strangely enough, Theophylact, Calvin, and Maldonatus, hold that they are one and the same—the last saying, *Quæ dissimilia videntur adeo sunt levia, ut ab hac sententiâ dimovere non debant.*

ferent times, and the different tempers of the hearers, the parable in St. Luke wears a milder, in St. Matthew a severer, aspect:—in the latter the guilt is greater, the retribution more terrible. In that other, the guests decline indeed the invitation, but civilly excuse themselves; in this, they mark their contempt for the invitation as strongly as they can, not thinking it worth their while to make any excuse, and some of them maltreating and killing the servants, the bearers of the message: doubtless too, had it consisted with the decorum of the other parts of the narration, the king's son himself would have been the bearer of the invitation and the victim of their outrage, as the householder's son in the last parable. In that the contemptuous guests are merely excluded from the festival,—in this, their city is burned up and themselves destroyed. And as the contempt would be aggravated in proportion to the dignity and honour of the person inviting and the solemnity of the occasion, this increased guilt is set forth by the fact that it is a king, and no common man as in that other, who makes the festival,—so that rebellion is mingled with their contempt,—and the festival itself no ordinary one, but one in honour of his son's marriage; by which latter circumstance is brought out the relation of the Jews, not merely to the kingdom of God in general, but their relation to Jesus, the personal theocratic King; and in every way the guilt involved in their rejection of Him is enhanced. And again, while in the parable recorded by St. Luke, nothing more is threatened than that God would turn from one portion of the Jewish people,—from the priests and the Pharisees,—and offer the benefits which they counted light of, to another part of the same nation,—the people that knew not the law, the publicans and harlots,—with only a slight intimation (ver. 23) of the call of the Gentiles; in St. Matthew it is threatened that the kingdom of God shall be taken wholly away from the Jewish people, who had now proved themselves in the mass, and with very few exceptions, despisers of its privileges, and given to the Gentiles.\*

\* Fleck (*De Reg. Div.* p. 241) with truth observes: *Parabolarum in*

But a late caviller,\* not attending to these circumstances, which justify and perfectly explain the appearance of the parable in forms so different, asserts that here St. Luke is the only accurate narrator of Christ's words, and that St. Matthew has mixed up with them some foreign elements,—for instance, some particulars, as of the maltreatment and murder of the servants, drawn from the parable preceding; and has also blended into the same whole the fragment of another, namely, of the Wedding Garment, which when uttered was totally distinct. For the first assertion his only argument wearing the slightest appearance of probability, is, that while it is quite intelligible that husbandmen should abuse and maltreat servants of their lord, who came demanding rent from them; it is inconceivable, and therefore could not find place in a parable, of which perfect verisimilitude is a necessary condition, that invited guests, however unwilling to keep their engagement, should actually maltreat and kill the servants sent to remind them that the festival, to which they were engaged, was now ready. It is, of course, true that this *can* with difficulty be conceived, when we suppose no other motive but unwillingness to keep the engagement at work in them. Yet may we not presume that a deep alienation from their lord, with a readiness to resist and rebel against him, existing long before, found its utterance here? In the presence of these his ambassadors, an outrage against whom would express as much as an outrage against himself, the desired occasion may have offered itself for showing a hostility, which had long been entertained.†

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posterioribus Matthæiani libri partibus propositarum talis est indoles, ut sacrum divini animi mœrorem spirent, et severum prodant habitum. Incidunt in ea tempora quibus Pharisæorum, sacerdotum, seniorumque plebis machinationem, maligna consilia, et cœcitatem abunde expertus Servator, divinæ causæ quotidie infestiores prævidit futuros. And Unger (*De Parab. Jes. Nat.* p. 122): Videtur itaque Matthæus parabolam tradidisse, qualem Jesus posteriore eâque austeriore occasione ipse repetierit, variatam, auctiorem, severiorem, jam toto de populo judaico mœste vaticinantem.

\* STRAUSS, *Leben Jesu*, vol. i. p. 677, seq.

† Oftentimes in the East, a feast would have a great political significance—would, in fact, be a great gathering of the vassals of the

The little apparent motive makes their conduct almost monstrous, yet thus fitter to declare the monstrous fact, that men should maltreat and slay the messengers of God's grace, the ambassadors of Christ, who come to them with glad tidings of good things,—should be ready to rend *them*, as well as to tread their pearls under foot.

His other assertion, that the latter part of the parable which relates to the wedding garment cannot have originally belonged to it, rests partly on the old objection, that the guest could not in justice be punished for not having that, which, as the course of the story goes, he had no opportunity of obtaining,—on which objection there will be occasion presently to remark,—and partly upon this, that there is here an entirely new and alien element introduced into, and marring the unity of, the parable; something appended to, not intimately cohering with, it. But so far from this being the case, we have here a wonderful example of the love and wisdom which marked the teaching of our Lord. For how fitting was it that in a parable, which invited sinners of every degree to a fellowship in the blessings of the Gospel, they should be reminded likewise, that for the lasting enjoyment of these, they must put off their former conversation,—in Theophylact's words, “that the entrance, indeed, to the marriage-feast is without scrutiny, for by grace alone we are called, as well bad as good; but the life of those that have entered, hereafter shall not be without scrutiny: the King will make a very strict examination of those who, having entered into the faith, shall be found in filthy garments”—a most needful caution, lest any should abuse the grace of God, and forget that while, as regarded the past, they were freely called, they were yet for the time present and to come called unto holiness.

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king; contemplated on this side, their refusal to come at once assumes the aspect of rebellion. Thus there are many reasons to suppose that the feast recorded in Esth. i. is the same as the great gathering which Xerxes (Ahasuerus) made, when he was planning his Greek expedition (*σύλλογον ἐπικληρον Περσίων τῶν ἀρίστων*, Herod. vii. 8), though Herodotus brings out more its political, the sacred historian its festal, side.



Thus much on the relation in which this parable stands to that recorded by St. Luke. In the present as compared with the last, we see how the Lord is revealing Himself in ever clearer light as the central person of the kingdom, giving here a far plainer hint than there of the nobility of his descent. There He was indeed the son, the only and beloved one, of the householder; but here his race is royal, and He appears as Himself at once the king, and the king's son (Ps. lxxii. 1). This appearance of the householder as also the king announces that the sphere in which this parable moves is that of the New-Testament dispensation, is that of the kingdom, which was announced before, but was only actually present with the coming of the king. That last was a parable of the Old-Testament history; even Christ Himself appears there rather as the last and greatest of the line of its prophets and teachers, than as the founder of a new kingdom. In that, a parable of the law, God appears *demanding* something *from* men; in this, a parable of grace, God appears more as *giving* something *to* them. There, He is displeased that his demands are not complied with; here, that his goodness is not accepted: there He requires; here He imparts. And thus, as we so often find, the two mutually complete one another; this taking up the matter where the other left it.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage\* for his son."* The two favourite images under which the prophets set forth the blessings of the new covenant, and of all near communion with God, that of a

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\* The phrase *ποιεῖν γάμον*, occurring Gen. xxix. 22; Tob. viii. 19; 1 Macc. ix. 37, x. 58 (LXX.), is rather, as also often in classical Greek, to celebrate the marriage *feast* than the marriage (see Matt. xxv. 10; Esth. ii. 18), and sometimes the notion of the marriage is altogether lost, and that of the festival alone remains: so for instance, Esth. ix. 22, where the *γάμοι* are merely feastings; not otherwise, I think, should the word be understood at Luke xiv. 8, and at ver. 4 of the present parable. Singularly enough, exactly the reverse has happened with the German *Hochzeit*, which signifying at first any *high* festival, is now only the festival of a *marriage*. These marriage festivities lasted commonly seven, or fourteen, days (Gen. xxix. 27; Judg. xiv. 12; Tob. viii. 19).

festival (Isai. xxv. 6; lxv. 13; Cant. v. 1), and that of a marriage (Isai. lxi. 10; lxii. 5; Hos. ii. 19; Matt. ix. 15; John iii. 29; Ephes. v. 32; 2 Cor. xi. 2), are united and interpenetrate one another in the marriage festival\* here. There appears indeed this inconvenience, resulting from the inadequacy of things human to set forth things divine, that the members of the Church are at once the guests invited to the feast, and, in their collective capacity, constitute the bride at whose espousals the feast is given.† But in the progress of the narrative the circumstances of the marriage altogether fall into the back-ground;‡ the different conduct of the guests invited to the feast becomes the prominent feature of the narration. This parable, like the last, has its groundwork and its rudiments in the Old Testament (Exod. xxiv. 11; Zeph. i. 7, 8; Prov. ix. 1); and it entered quite into the circle of Jewish expectations, that the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah should be accompanied with, and ushered in by, a glorious festival: nor does our Lord Himself refuse elsewhere to make use of the same image for the setting forth the same truths (Luke xxii. 18, 30). It is true indeed that the marriage is spoken of there, and at Rev. xix. 7, as one that shall not take place till the end of the present age, while here the Lord

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\* Vitringa (*In Apocul.* xix. 7): *Nuptiæ ipsæ figurant arctissimam Christi cum Ecclesiâ unionem, fide utrinque datâ, et fœderali contractu obsignatam, ad faciendam spirituales sobolem, quæ orbem replcat. Epulum nuptiale adumbrat tum beneficia gratiæ, quæ vi justitiæ Christi Ecclesiæ ad satietatem et hilaritatem exhibentur, tum illorum beneficiorum communionem, tum denique lætitiâ et festivitatem, quæ cum fruitione bonorum gratiæ conjungitur, et ex eâ ad convivas hujus epuli redundat.*

† Augustine (*In Ep 1 Joh. Tract.* 2): *Non quomodo in nuptiis carnalibus alii frequentant nuptias et alia nubit: in Ecclesiâ qui frequentant, si bene frequentant, sponsa fiunt.*

‡ This difficulty would be altogether escaped, if we understood this marriage as one between the divine Word and the human Nature,—God and man united and making one Christ; so Augustine and Gregory the Great (*Hom.* 38 *in Evang.*) have understood it, though certainly neither to the exclusion of the more obvious meaning suggested by such passages as Ephes. v. 24-32, according to which the marriage would be one between Christ and his Church. Gregory shows how well the two interpretations can be reconciled, saying, *In hoc Pater regi filio nuptias fecit, quo ei per incarnationis mysterium sanctam Ecclesiam sociavit.*

speaks of it as already present; but the two statements are easily reconcilable, when we keep in mind how distinct the espousals and the actual marriage were held in the East, and contemplate his first coming as the time of his espousals, while not till his second coming will He lead home his bride.

At a fitting time the king "*sent forth his servants\* to call them that were bidden to the wedding*"—we must presume, a numerous company, for in the corresponding parable in St. Luke, the giver of the feast, a private man as it would seem, "*bade many.*" Here then we may suppose still larger numbers to have been bidden, even as the maker of the feast was a greater person, and the occasion a more solemn one (compare Esth. i. 3-9). This second invitation, or admonishment rather, is quite according to Eastern manners. Thus Esther invites Haman to a banquet on the morrow (Esth. v. 8), and when the time has actually arrived, the chamberlain comes to bring him to the banquet (vi. 14). Modern travellers testify to the same custom now of repeating the invitation to a great entertainment, at the moment when all things are in actual readiness; so that there is no reason at all why with some we should make "*them that were bidden*" to mean them that were now *to be* bidden.†

Indeed, deeper reasons than those that lie on the surface of the parable are against this; for our Lord in assuming the guests to have been invited long before, would bring out that the new was not indeed new, but rather a fulfilment of the old; that He claimed to be heard, not as one suddenly starting up, unconnected with all which had gone before Him, but as Himself "*the end of the law,*" that to which it all had been tending, the birth with which the whole Jewish dispensation had been pregnant, and which at length gave a meaning to it all. In those words, "*to call them that were bidden,*" He teaches us,

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\* Technically, vocatores, invitatores, κλήτορες, δειπνοκλήτορες, ἐλέαργοι. See Prov. ix. 3-5

† Thus Storr (*Opusc. Acad.* vol. i p. 120) affirms τοὺς κεκλημένους may as well signify vocandos as vocatos! Did not this refute itself, Luke xiv. 16, 17, would be decisive in the matter.

as He would fain have taught those who then heard Him, that there was nothing abrupt in the coming in of his kingdom, that its rudiments had a long while before been laid, that all which they clung to as precious in their past history was prophetic of blessings now actually present to themselves.\* The invitation first went forth at the constitution of the Jewish nation as God's elect people, and ran through all their history. It was taken up and repeated by each succeeding prophet, as he prophesied of the crowning grace that should one day be brought to Israel in the actual presence in the midst of it of its Lord and King, and summoned the people to hold themselves in a spiritual readiness against that day.

Yet the actual calling of "*them that were bidden*" pertained not to these, the prophets of the older dispensation. They spoke only of good things to come. Not till the days of John the Baptist was the kingdom actually present, was there any manifestation of the king's son, any summoning of the guests, bidden long before, to come to the marriage. By the first band of servants I should understand John and the Apostles in their first mission—that which they accomplished during the lifetime of the Lord, his Incarnation being the true bridal of the earth and heaven.† His own share in summoning the guests, his inviting them, that is, unto Himself, his "Come

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\* See in this view the admirable use which Tertullian makes of this parable, or rather of its parallel (Luke xiv. 16), arguing against Marcion (iv. 31), whose great aim was to cut loose the New Testament from the Old. So too Irenæus, *Con. Hær.* iv. 36.

† These missions by the king of his servants to summon the guests (ver. 3, 4) have been sometimes differently understood. Thus Origen applies them both to the sending of the prophets under the law; Jerome makes no doubt that the first mission (ver. 3) is to be so understood, though he is more doubtful about the second. So too Gregory the Great (*Hom. 38 in Evang.*) understands it: *Bis itaque servos ad invitandum misit, quia Incarnationem Unigeniti et per prophetas dixit futuram, et per Apostolos nuntiavit factam.* I am now persuaded, however, that Hilary's is in the main the true explanation; who (*Comm. in Matth.* in loc.) thus expresses himself: *Servi missi, qui invitatos vocarent, Apostoli sunt: eorum enim erat proprium, commonefacere eos, quos invitaverant prophetæ. Qui vero iterum eum præceptorum conditione mittuntur, Apostolici sunt viri et successores Apostolorum.*

unto *me*," is naturally in the parable kept out of sight. It would have disturbed those proprieties which it was needful to observe, to have made the king's son himself a bearer of the invitation. A condescension so infinite would have seemed unnatural; for it is only the son of the *heavenly* king that has ever stooped so far. He indeed, putting back no office of love and loving service from Himself, was content, even while the marriage was made for Him, to be as one of those sent forth to call the guests thereunto. We observe upon this first occasion no actual maltreatment of the servants sent out; a general averseness, indeed, from the message, and alienation from the messengers; but as yet no positive outrage; nor were there any displays of such against the Apostles or disciples during the lifetime of the Lord,\* nor at the first against the Lord Himself. It was simply "*they would not come.*" "*Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.*"

"*Again he sent forth other servants.*" The invitation which Christ made to the Jews in the days of his flesh, and which they had rejected then, He renews after his resurrection and ascension. Of these indeed, as of the crucifixion, nothing is said; for the parable would not bear it. It need not perplex us to find this second company spoken of as "*other servants,*" while, in fact, many of them were the same. In the first place, there *were* many other now associated with these, Stephen and Barnabas and Paul, with many more, who not till after Pentecost were added to the Church. Those, too, who *were* the same, yet went forth as new men, full of the Holy Ghost, and with a message fuller than at the first, not preaching generally a kingdom of God, but preaching now "*Jesus and the resurrection;*" declaring, which it may be observed they had not been bidden to do before, that "*all things were ready,*" that all the obstacles in the way of men's entrance into the kingdom, which their sin had reared up, God's grace had removed

\* The death of John the Baptist cannot be urged as invalidating this assertion; for he by whose command he was murdered was an Edomite, not therefore one of the invited guests at all—and moreover it was for preaching the Law, not the Gospel, that he died.

(Acts ii. 38, 39; iii. 19-26; iv. 12); that in that very blood which they had impiously shed, there was forgiveness of all sins, and freedom of access to God. And let us not miss in the parable or in its application the infinite grace which gives to the guests the opportunity of coming to a better mind, and making good their former neglect and contempt. The king, as though he thought it possible that they deferred coming, not being aware that all the preparations were completed, or that some other misunderstanding had kept them away, instead of threatening or rebuking, told his servants only to press the message with greater distinctness and instancy: "*Tell them which are bidden,*" so tell them that they cannot mistake, that every anterior preparation is made,\* and that now "*all things are ready.*" And exactly thus was it with the Apostles after the crucifixion; how willing were they to look upon all that was past in the mildest possible light; thus Peter: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it" (Acts iii. 17);—how did they refuse to dwell upon the past sin, urging rather the present grace!

If the king's servants had found dull and deaf ears on their first mission, they find still greater averseness from themselves and from their message on their second. And they too themselves fare worse. The guests, when they heard the reiterated invitation, "*made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.*" There are ever in the world two kinds of despisers of the Gospel of God: some in whom it excites feelings of positive enmity; of these we shall hear presently; others who do not so much actively hate it, as love the world better than it. These last are those who go their way, "*one to his farm, another to his merchandise.*" The question arises, Can we make a distinction here? did the Lord intend a distinction? Perhaps if we understand of the first

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\* "*My oxen and my fatlings are killed.*" This would be a sign of the immediate nearness of the feast. Chardin (*Voy. en Perse*, vol. iv. p. 48): On tue le matin le mouton et l'agneau qu'on mangera le soir. . . . Les Persans croient que la meilleure chair est le plus fraîche tuée. (See Gen. xviii. 7, 8; xliii. 16; Prov. ix. 1-5.)

as one who went to *his estate*, and the word will perfectly bear us out in this, a distinction will appear. The first is the landed proprietor, the second the merchant. The first would *enjoy* what he already possesses, the second would *acquire* what as yet is *his only* in anticipation. This will agree with Luke xiv. 18, 19; where the guest who has bought a property and must needs go and see it, will be one who has entered into the first condition; the guest who would fain try his five yoke of oxen, will belong to the second. The temptations which beset the *having* and the *getting*, though cognate, are yet not altogether the same. There is quite difference enough between them to account for the distinction. One of the guests when urged to come, turned to that which by his own or other men's labour he had already gotten—another to that which he was hoping to get.\* We have here those who are full, and those who are hoping to be full, of this world; and the woe which the Lord pronounced, Luke vi. 25, has come upon them; for this fulness has prevented them from discovering their emptiness of things heavenly; the divine hunger, the hunger and thirst after righteousness, has never been awakened in their souls.

Nor is this the worst; "*the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*" The oppositions to the Gospel are not merely *natural*, they are also *devilish*. Men's worldliness resists the truth; but there are deeper evils in their hearts, which it will often not fail to arouse. It wounds their pride, it affronts their self-righteousness; and where they dare, they will visit on those that bring it the hate which they bear to itself. Three forms of outrage are enumerated here; and what an abundant commentary on these prophetic words of the Lord do the Acts of the

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\* Bengel, who is gifted with such wonderful skill in detecting the finer allusions of Scripture, brings out the difference exactly so: *Alius per falsam αὐράρειαν*, alius per cupiditatem acquirendi detentus. And Gerhard suggests, though with no great confidence, the same explanation (*Harm. Evang.* 163): *Quid si per abeuntes ad negotiationem intelligamus eos qui inhiant opibus adhuc acquirendis; per abeuntes ad villam, qui male delectantur in opibus jam ante partis et acquisitis?*

Apostles, and much else in the later Scriptures, supply. They "*took*," or laid violent hands on, "*his servants*" (Acts iv. 3; v. 18; viii. 3); they "*entreated them spitefully*" (Acts v. 40; xiv. 5, 19; xvii. 5; xxi. 30; xxiii. 2); they "*slew them*" (Acts vii. 58; xii. 3; cf. Matt. xxiii. 34).\*

"*But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth.*" The insult was to him, and was intended for him; as in every case where an ambassador is outraged, it is his master whom the blow was intended to reach (2 Sam. x.). As such it was avenged; for the king "*sent forth his armies*," that is, as some say, God sent forth his avenging angels, the armies in heaven (Rev. xix. 14), the legions that are at his bidding (Matt. xxvi. 53; 1 Kin. xxii. 19; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16);† or, it may be, the hosts of Rome‡ (Dan. ix. 26), which were equally "*his armies*," since even ungodly men are men of God's hand, by whom He punishes his own people that have sinned, or executes vengeance on other more wicked than themselves (thus Isai. x. 4, "O Assyrian, the rod of *mine* anger;" and compare Isai. xiii. 5; Ezek. xvi. 41; Jer. xxv. 9, "Nebuchadnezzar, *my servant*"). In fact, the two explanations flow into one, for when God's wrath is to be executed, the earthly and visible ministers of his judgments and the unseen armies of heaven are evermore leagued together. The natural eye sees only those, the spiritual eye beholds the other also behind. It is ever at such moments as it was with Israel of old (1 Chron. xxi. 16). The multitude, to whom the purged spiritual eye was wanting, beheld only the outward calamity, the wasting pestilence; but David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of

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\* To this part of the parable 2 Chron. xxx. 10 supplies an interesting parallel. When Hezekiah restored the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, he sent messengers throughout all the tribes, inviting all Israel to share in the solemn passover which he was about to keep—that is, bidding them to the feast. "So the posts passed from city to city . . . but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them." Yet as guests were brought in to the marriage-supper, so in this case also, "divers humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem."

† Gregory the Great (*Hom. 38 in Evang.*): Quid namque sunt illa Angelorum agmina, nisi exercitus Regis nostri?

‡ So Irenæus, *Con. Hær.* iv. 36, 6.



the Lord, standing between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand.\* "*The city of these murderers*" can, of course, be no other than Jerusalem, the central point of the Jewish theocracy (Matt. xxiii. 34, 35; Luke xiii. 33, 34; Acts vii. 39; xii. 2, 3). There lies an awful threat in this appellation which is given it. It is *their* city, "*the city of these murderers*," not any longer "the city of the great King," who no longer owns it for his. With a similar threatening Christ says, "*Your house is left unto you desolate*" (Matt. xxiii. 38); "*your house*," not mine, for I have forsaken it, however it may still bear my name. So to Moses God says, "*Thy people have corrupted themselves*" (Exod. xxxii. 7); "*thy people*," not mine; for the covenant between Him and them was suspended by their sin.

"*Then*" (Acts xiii. 46) "*saieth he to his servants, The wedding is ready; but they which were bidden were not worthy.*" Their unworthiness consisted in their rejection of the invitation, even as the worthiness of those who did find a place at the festival consisted—not in their previous state, for in that regard they were most unworthy of the honour of sitting down at the king's table,—but in their acceptance of the invitation. "*Go ye therefore into the highways,† and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage.*" Here the doctrine so hateful to

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\* Even the heathen could understand this. When Troy was perishing, the poet describes the multitude as seeing only their Grecian enemies engaged in the work of destruction; but to Æneas, when his goddess mother had purged his eyes, there appeared other foes; to him

Apparent diræ facies inimicaque Trojæ . .

Numina magna Deum.

Æneid. ii. 601-623.

† It seems hard to determine whether these *διέξοδοι* are transitus or exitus (Passow gives both meanings, Durchgang and Ausgang): whether the thoroughfares (see Ps. i 3, lxx., where the word is used for channels of waters), or the outlets leading from the city (Grotius: Viæ extra urbem ducentes), or such as entered into its places and squares (Kuinoel: Compita viarum), or the points where many roads or streets meet; Chrysostom (*Hom. 69 in Matth.*) more than once substitutes *ῥηίδους*. (Schleusner: Loca ubi plures plateæ concurrunt.) All these places have an equal fitness, in regard of being places of concourse and resort, where the servants might hope soon to gather a company. But we must not permit the English expression "*highways*" to suggest to us places in the country as contra-distinguished from the town,

Jewish ears (see Acts xxii. 21, 22), the calling of the Gentiles, and that by occasion of the disobedience of the Jews, is again plainly declared. By the breaking off of the natural branches of the olive room shall be made for the grafting in of the wild olive in their stead (Rom. xi.),—so Paul sets forth that truth, which here his Lord declares under the image of the exclusion of those guests, who in the natural order of things would have best become the wedding, and were invited to it, and the reception of those gathered in from the highways in their stead. Compare Matt. viii. 10-12, of which this parable is only the ampler unfolding.

Hereupon the servants "*went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good.*" In the spirit of this command, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" there (Acts viii. 5); Peter baptized Cornelius and his company; and Paul proclaimed to the men of Athens how God now commanded "*all men everywhere to repent.*" When it is said they gathered in "*bad*" as well as "*good*,"—in which words there is a passing over from the thing signifying to the thing signified, since moral qualities would scarcely be predicated of the guests as such,—we are not to see here an explanation of the fact that one should hereafter be found at the festival without a wedding garment; it is not to prepare the way for and to account for that fact, that these different qualities of the guests are mentioned. "*Bad*" here is not equivalent to "*not having a wedding garment*" there; on the contrary, many were "*bad*" when invited, who, through accepting the invitation, passed into the number of the "*good*." for the beautiful words of Augustine on Christ's love to his Church may find here their application, "He loved her foul, that He might make her fair."\* Neither may the terms "*bad and good*," and least of

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whither the servants were sent; the image throughout the parable is of a city, in which the rich and great and noble, those who naturally would be selected for a king's guests, refuse to come to his banquet, whereupon the poor of the same city are brought in to share it.

\* *Fœdam amavit, ut pulchram faceret; a thought which he pursues*

all the latter, be pressed too far: for speaking with strict accuracy, none are "*good*" till they have been incorporated into the body of Christ, and are sharers in his Spirit. Yet for all this few will deny that there are different degrees of moral life, even anterior to obedience to the call of the Gospel. There are "*good*," such, for instance, as Cornelius, or those Gentiles that were a law to themselves (Rom. ii. 14; cf. Luke viii. 15); and "*bad*," those who are so far sunk in moral depravity, that to men there seems no hope of restoration for them; \*—"such were some of you," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, after enumerating sinners of the worst kinds (1 Cor. vi. 9-11). The Gospel of Christ is the draw-net which brings within its ample folds both those who have been before honestly striving after a righteousness according to the law, and those who have been utterly "dead in trespasses and sins." Its invitation some of both classes accept: "*the wedding was furnished with guests.*"

This, which was the conclusion of the other and earlier spoken parable (Luke xiv. 16), is only the first act in the present. There is still another solemn act of judgment to follow. Hitherto the parable with all the prophetic hints

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at length elsewhere (in 1 *Ep. Joh. Tract* 9), among other things saying: *Amavit nos prior qui semper est pulcher. Et quales amavit, nisi fœdos et deformes? Non idēo tamen ut fœdos dimitteret, sed ut mutaret et ex deformibus pulchros faceret. Quomodo erimus pulchri? amando eum qui semper est pulcher. Quantum in te crescit amor, tantum crescit pulchritudo, quia ipsa caritas est animæ pulchritudo.*

\* Jerome, on these "*bad and good.*" Inter ipsos quoque Ethnicos est diversitas infinita, quum sciamus alios esse proclives ad vitia et ruentes ad mala, alios ob honestatem morum virtutibus deditos. Augustine's conflict with the Pelagians would have hindered him from expressing himself exactly in these last words, and he will only allow these "*good*" to be minus mali than the others. Yet he too is most earnest against the abuse of these words, which should argue for allowing men to come to baptism without having faithfully renounced, as far as human eye could see, all their past ungodliness; for that were to make the servants of the householder themselves the sowers of the tares (*De Fide et Oper.* 17). Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* vii. 202): *Jubet bonos et malos introire, ut bonos augeat, malorum affectum in meliora commutet; ut compleretur illud quod lectum est: Tunc lupi et agni simul pascentur.*

and glimpses which it gives of the wickedness of men and judgments of God, has been addressed to the chief priests and Pharisees; or generally to the Jewish nation, in so far as it cared not, or as it hated, to hear the glad tidings of salvation. It is now for those who have accepted their portion therein, with an earnest warning also for them. Besides the separation between those who come and those who refuse to come, it shall be also tried at the last who among the actual comers have walked worthy of their vocation, and who not; and as it has been thus or thus, there shall be a second sifting and separation. We have seen the judgment on the avowed foe: that on the false friend is still to follow. It is the office of the servants to gather in the guests to the heavenly banquet; but it is not *their* office here, any more than in the parable of the Tares, to separate decisively and finally between the worthy partakers and the unworthy intruders. And indeed, how should it be? For the garment which distinguishes these from those is worn, not on the body, but on the heart: \* and only "the Lord trieth the hearts."

It pertained, we may presume, to the dignity of the king, that he should not appear at the festival till all were assembled, nor indeed till all had now occupied their places at the banquet; for that the guests were arranged, and as we should say, though with a certain incorrectness, "seated," is implied in the word which describes them now.† But then, when he "*came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.*" At once he detected one who lacked the comely apparel which became a guest admitted to a royal festival. Him he addresses, as yet with a gentle compellation, for it was yet to be seen whether he could explain away his apparent contempt; "*Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having‡ a wedding garment?*" But he could not; "*he was speechless.*"

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\* Augustine: Vestis quippe illa in corde, non in carne, inspiciebatur.

† Τοὺς ἀνακειμένους = discumbentes (Vulg.); Wiclif: "the men sitting at the meat."

‡ We may observe that it is the subjective, and not the objective,

But why could he not answer that it was unreasonable to expect of him, brought in of a sudden and without warning from the highways, to be furnished with such?—that he was too poor to provide,—or that no time had been allowed him to go home and fetch,—such a garment? Some, willing to get rid of any semblance of harshness in the after conduct of the king, maintain that in the East, when kings or great personages made an entertainment, it was their wont to present costly dresses to the guests. Such a custom, they say, is here tacitly assumed, so that this guest could only now appear not having such a garment, because he had rejected it when offered to him; and had thus both despised the honour done to him in the gift, and had also by that rejection plainly declared that he counted his ordinary work-day apparel, soiled and stained as it may probably have been, sufficiently good in which to appear in the presence of the king, being guilty thus of a twofold offence.

Others, however, have denied that any certain traces of such a custom are anywhere to be found, affirming that the only notice which we have of anything resembling it, is the modern custom of clothing with a caftan those that are admitted into the presence of the Sultan. It must be acknowledged that the passage (Judg. xiv. 13) often adduced in proof, fails to prove anything; and perhaps no distinct evidence is forthcoming of any such practice as that assumed. Still we know enough of the undoubted customs of the East to make

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particle of negation which is here used, μή and not οὐ—μή ἔχων ἔνδυμα γάμου, “not having (and knowing that thou hadst not) the wedding garment;” with a consciousness that it was wanting.—The ἔνδυμα γάμου is not exactly the ἱμάτιον νυμφικόν of Plutarch (*Amator.* 10), for that is the garment not of the guests, but of the bridegroom; nor yet the ἑσθῆς νυμφική of Chariton, i. p. 6, which is that of the bride (BECKER'S *Charikles*, vol. ii. p. 467). Yet there may lie under the use of this phrase, which seems at first fitter to set forth the array of the bridegroom than that of the invited guests, that the true adornment of each of these at the spiritual marriage is identical with that of the bridegroom: from him they have it; it is of the same kind as that which he wears himself; for they who are rightly arrayed have “put on the Lord Jesus Christ;” and as He is, so are they in the world.

it extremely probable that presents of dresses were often distributed among the guests at a marriage festival, especially one like the present, celebrated with great pomp and magnificence; so that our Lord's hearers, to whom those customs must have been familiar, would have naturally supplied the omission in the narration, and taken for granted such a gift going before, especially when they found so severe a penalty inflicted on this man, for a want which otherwise he could not well have avoided. We know in the first place, that it was part of the state and magnificence of kings and wealthy persons in the East, to have great store of costly dresses laid up, as at the present day a large portion of their wealth is very commonly invested in numerous changes of costly apparel (Job xxviii. 16; Isai. iii. 6; Jam. v. 2; 2 Kin. x. 22).<sup>\*</sup> Keeping this in mind, we need not suppose that the number of guests, however great, would have created any embarrassment. We know moreover that costly dresses were often given as honourable presents, marks of especial favour (Gen. xlv. 22; 1 Sam. xviii. 4; 2 Kin. v. 5; Dan. v. 7; Esth. vi. 8; 1 Macc. x. 20); that they were then, as now, the most customary gifts:—and marriage festivals (Esth. ii. 18) and other occasions of festal rejoicing (2 Sam. vi. 19) were naturally those upon which gifts were distributed with the largest hand. If the gift took the form of costly raiment, it would naturally be expected that it should be worn at once, as part of the purpose of the distribution would else be defeated, which was to testify openly the magnificence and liberality of the giver, and also to add to the splendour and glory of the festal time;—not to say that the rejection of a gift, or the appearance of a slight put upon

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\* The story told by Horace of the five thousand mantles which Lucullus, on examining his wardrobe, found that he possessed, is well known; and this extract from Chardin (*Voy. en Perse*, vol. iii. p. 280, Langlès' ed.), a traveller of whom all later inquirers into Eastern customs join in praising the accuracy and extent of information, may be accepted in proof that the number of the garments needed would have been readily at hand: *On ne sauroit croire la dépense que fait le roi de Perse pour ces présents-là. Le nombre des habits qu'il donne est infini. On en tient toujours ses garde-robes pleines. On les tient dans les magasins séparés par assortiment.*

it, is ever naturally esteemed as a slight and contempt not of that gift only, but also of the giver.\*

But in addition to the affront of rejecting the gift, supposing it to be granted that such a gift going before may be safely assumed, this guest was guilty of a further affront in appearing at the festival in unsuitable, probably in mean and sordid, apparel. Even with us there are occasions when such

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\* So strongly is this felt, that we are not without example in the modern history of the East (and Eastern manners so little change that modern examples are nearly as good as ancient), of a vizier having lost his life through thus very failing to wear a garment of honour sent to him by the king. Chardin mentions the circumstances;—the officer through whose hands the royal robe was to be forwarded, out of spite sent in its stead a plain habit. The vizier would not appear in the city arrayed in this, lest it should be taken as an evidence that he was in disgrace at court, and put on in its stead a royal habit, the gift of the late king, and in that made his public entry into the city. When this was known at court, they declared the vizier a dog, that he had disdainfully thrown away the royal apparel, saying, 'I have no need of Sha Seff's habits.' Their account incensed the king, who severely felt the affront, and it cost the vizier his life (BURDER's *Orient. Liter.* vol. i. p. 94. Cf. Herodotus, ix. 111, for an example of the manner in which the rejecting a monarch's gift was resented)—Olearius (*Travels*, p. 214) gives an account of himself, with the ambassadors whom he accompanied, being invited to the table of the Persian king. He goes on to say, "It was told us by the melmander, that we according to their usage must hang the splendid vests that were sent us from the king over our dresses, and so appear in his presence. The ambassadors at first refused, but the melmander urged it so earnestly, alleging, as also did others, that the omission would greatly displease the king, since all other envoys observed such a custom, that at last they consented, and hanged, as did we also, the splendid vests over their shoulders, and so the cavalcade proceeded." This passage, besides its value as showing us how the rejection of the garment of honour, or rather the failing to appear in it, would be felt as an insult, clears away any difficulty which might have occurred to any from the apparent unfitness of the king's palace as a place for changing of apparel. In fact, there was strictly speaking no such changing of apparel, for the garment of honour was either a vest drawn over the other garments, or a mantle hung on the shoulders. Schulz, in his *Travels*, describes that given to him, as "a long robe with loose sleeves, which hang down (for the arm is not put into them), the white ground of which is goat's hair, mixed with some silver, but the flowers woven in are of gold-coloured silk," and his account of the necessity of putting it on before appearing in the presence of the Sultan, agrees with that given by the earlier traveller (ROSENMÜLLER's *Alte und Neue Morgenl.* vol. v. p. 76).

conduct would be felt as manifesting a serious lack of respect; much more among the nations of antiquity, especially those of the East, where outward symbols have a significance so far greater than with us, would such an omission as that whereof this guest was guilty, be felt as a grievous affront and insult\* to the person in whose honour the more splendid apparel ought to have been put on; and, of course, the more honourable the person, the more flagrant the offence. And thus, however others may have been forward to say something in this guest's behalf,—as that he could not help appearing as he did, or that his fault was after all but a slight one,—he did not feel that he had anything to say for himself; “*he was speechless*,” or literally, his mouth was stopped, he was gagged,† with no plea to allege for his contemptuous behaviour; he stood self-condemned,‡ at once convinced and convicted. The judgment is executed at once. “*Then said the king to the servants*,” or rather, to the ministering attendants, “*Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness*.” Within the palace was light and joy, but without it was cold and darkness; into this the unworthy guest, with

\* Irenæus then has exactly seized the right point when he says (*Con. Hær.* iv. 36, 6): Eum, qui non habet indumentum nuptiarum, hoc est, contemptorem. Compare with this the exceeding stress which Cicero lays, in his charges against Vatinius (*In Vatini.* xii. 13), on the fact of the latter having once appeared clad in black at a great and solemn festival (supplicatio)—how much of wanton indignity and insult he saw in it, both toward the giver of the feast, and also toward the other guests. “Who ever,” he asks, “even in a time of domestic grief, appeared at a supper thus arrayed in black?” and we learn from that passage, as from many others, that none but white garments, which, however, would afford great room for magnificence, were considered becoming for a festival (see BECKER’s *Charikles*, vol. ii. p. 469). It was the same among the Hebrews; for one exhorting to continual merriment and festal gladness exclaims, “Let thy garments be always white” (*Eccles.* ix. 8), that is, keep a continual feast.

† Ἐπιμύθη, from φμῶς = ἐπιστόμιον, a gag. Chrysostom admirably explains it, *κατέκρινεν αὐτόν*. Such gags (in Latin, *camus*) were actually in use, not merely for beasts, but sometimes for rebellious slaves, or criminals on their way to execution (see SCHÖETTER’S *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 241, and the *Param. Græci*, Oxf. 1836, p. 41). The word is used in its literal sense, 1 Tim. v. 18.

‡ For in Cicero’s words: Taciturnitas imitatur confessionem.



no power of resisting the fulfilment of the decree, for his hands and feet were first bound, was to be cast; and there for him, under the sense of his shame and loss and exclusion from the festal joy, would be "*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

This brings the parable to an end according to the letter; yet is there much in this latter part which demands an accurate inquiry. When, it may first be asked, does the great King come in "*to see,*" or to scrutinize,\* "*the guests?*" Not *exclusively* in the day of final judgment, though indeed most signally then; but at every other judgment whereby hypocrites are revealed, or self-deceivers laid bare to themselves or to others; †—at every time of trial, which is also in its very nature a time of separation, a time when the thoughts of many hearts are laid bare. It still remains true that for the day of final judgment the complete separation is reserved; and then all that has been partially fulfilling in one and another will be altogether fulfilled in all.

Some interpreters, unwilling to let go the *singleness* of the guest without the wedding garment, would fain hold it fast in the interpretation; and have suggested that Judas may perhaps be immediately pointed out.‡ It is not impossible that a gracious Lord, who suffers none to perish without many attempts to save him, may have intended a merciful warning for him here. This, at any rate, is a more tolerable supposition than that of Vitranga, Cocceius, and others § of the historico-prophetical school, to wit, that it is the man of sin,

\* Θεάομαι, which is the word here, Schleusner explains: Fixis ac intentis oculis aspicio et intueor ad rem aliquam considerandam et dijudicandam. In the Vulgate, Ut *videret* discumbentes: the old Italic had better, Ut *inspiceret* discumbentes.

† Augustine: Intrat Deus iudicio, qui foris manet tolerando: and the *Aut. Oper. Imperf.*: Tunc regem ingredi, quando Deus tentat homines, ut appareat quantum quisque virtutis habeat, et an loco, quem in Ecclesiâ tenet, dignus sit.

‡ Thus Pseudo-Athanasius (*De Parab. Script.*); and in later times Weisse (*Evang. Gesch.* vol. ii. p. 114).

§ As GÜTTLER, *Syst. Theol. Proph.* p. 676. He finds a confirmation of this view in the fact, that the man is addressed as *ἐραῖπε*; Antichristus singulariter est *ἐραῖπος*, vicarium illius se venditans, et solio ejus solium nequitie associans!—The Jews have a curious tradition

by whom they understand the Pope. It is hardly, however, probable that any single person is intended, but rather under this one a great multitude; for the "*few*" presently said to be "*chosen*," as compared with the "*many called*" would seem to imply that there had been a great sifting. Why these many excluded should be here represented as a single person has been explained in different ways. Townson instances it as an example of what he happily calls "*the lenity of supposition*" which finds place in our Lord's parables; just as in another *one* servant only fails to turn his lord's money to account (Matt. xxv. 18). Gerhard ingeniously suggests, that "if many had been thrust out from the marriage, the nuptial festivities might seem to have been disturbed." But more valuable is another observation which he makes, namely that in this way the matter is brought home to the conscience of every man: "So diligent and exact will be the future scrutiny, that not so much as one in all that great multitude of men shall on the last day escape the piercing eyes of the Judge."\* Nor is there any difficulty in thus contemplating the whole multitude of evil-doers as a single person. For as the righteous are one, being gathered under their one head, which is Christ, so the congregation of the wicked are one, being gathered also under their one head, which is Satan. The mystical Babylon is one city no less than the mystical Jerusalem. There is a *kingdom* of darkness (Matt. xii. 25, 26), as well as a kingdom of God.†

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about Esau, who is their standing type of Antichrist, that he will be such a guest thrust out from the kingdom of God. It is found in the Jerusalem Talmud, and is as follows: "Esau the wicked will veil himself with his mantle, and sit among the righteous in Paradise in the world to come: and the holy blessed God will draw him and bring him out from thence; which is the sense of those words, Obad. iv. 6."

\* Cajetan the same: *Subtilis discretio in tantâ multitudine describitur; quia enim ita omnes Deus videt ut singulorum singillatim curam habeat, ideo unus describitur visus homo.*

† Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. lxi. 4*): *Levatus est de convivio et missus in pœnas nescio quis homo in tam magnâ turbâ recumbentium. Sed tamen Dominus volens ostendere unum illum hominem, unum corpus esse quod constat ex multis, ubi jussit eum projici foras, et mitti in debitas pœnas, subjecit continuo, Multi enim sunt vocati,*

More important is it to seize rightly the meaning of the wedding garment, and to settle what spiritual gift he lacked who had not that. About this it has been abundantly disputed. It is well known that the Roman controversialists have eagerly pressed this passage into their service, in the great dispute concerning the relative value of faith and charity. But when they assert that it must have been charity in which this guest was deficient, and not faith,—for that he had faith, since he would not have been present at the feast at all unless externally a believer, they are merely taking advantage of the double meaning of the word faith, to play off the occasional use of it as a bare assent to, or intellectual belief in, the truth, against St. Paul's far deeper use of the word,—and this most unfairly, for they must know that it is only in the latter sense of the word that any would attribute this guest's exclusion to his wanting faith. Were it needful to decide absolutely for one or other of these interpretations of the wedding garment, I would far sooner accept the other, as infinitely the deeper and truer, since the flower may be said to be contained in the root, but not the root in the flower, and so charity in faith, but not faith in charity.\* There is, however, no need to decide for either interpretation, in such a sense as to exclude the other. The great teachers in the early Church did not put themselves in contradiction to one another, when some of them asserted that what the intruder lacked was charity, and others faith; nay, the same writer,† without feeling that there was aught

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pauci vero electi . . . Qui sunt electi, nisi qui remanserunt. Projecto uno, electi remanserunt. Quomodo, projecto uno de multis, pauci electi nisi in illo uno multi? See also *Con. Don. post Coll.* 20. We have just the converse of this, 1 Cor. ix. 24. There the whole number of the elect are included in the "one that receiveth the prize."

\* Ignatius (*Ad Ephes.* 14) calls the twain ἀρχὴ ζωῆς καὶ τέλος ἀρχὴ μὲν πίστεως, τέλος δὲ ἀγάπης

† Thus Ambrose (*De Fide*, iv. 1) speaks of the nuptiale fidei vestimentum; while elsewhere (*De Pœnit.* i. 6) he says: Ille rejicitur qui non habet vestem nuptialem, hoc est, amictum caritatis, velamen gratiæ; and again, uniting his two former expositions (*Exp. in Luc.* vii. 204): Vestem nuptialem, hoc est, fidem et caritatem, In the same way Augustine (*Serm.* 90) joins them both: Habete fidem cum dilectione. Ista est vestis nuptialis. The *Auct. Oper. Imperf.*: Nuptiale vestimentum est

needing to be reconciled, would in one place give the one interpretation, and elsewhere the other. For what this guest wanted was righteousness, both in its root of faith and its flower of charity. He had not, according to the pregnant image of St. Paul, here peculiarly appropriate, "*put on Christ*;"—in which putting on of Christ, both faith and charity are included,—faith as the investing power, charity or holiness as the invested thing.\* By faith we recognize a righteousness out of and above us, and which yet is akin to us, and wherewith our spirits can be clothed, which righteousness is in Christ, who is the Lord our Righteousness. And this righteousness by the appropriative and assimilative power of faith we also make ours; we are clothed upon with it, so that it becomes, in that singularly expressive term, our *habit*,†—the righteous-

*fides vera quæ est per Jesum Christum et justitiâ ejus*; see also Basil (*on Isai. ix.*) for a like interpretation. But the fathers more frequently contemplate the wedding garment as charity, or sanctity. Thus Irenæus (*Con. Hær. iv. 36 6*): Qui vocati ad cœnam Dei, propter malam conversationem non perceperunt Spiritum Sanctum; and Hilary: Vestitus nuptialis est gloria Spiritûs Sancti et candor habitûs cœlestis, qui bonæ interrogationis confessione susceptus usque in cœtum regni cœlorum immaculatus et integer reservatur. So Gregory the Great, *Hom. 38 in Evang.* Still Grotius affirms too much when he says: Ita veteres magno consensu ad hunc locum. This is the predominant, though not, I think, the exclusive, sense given to it in our Exhortation to the Holy Communion; with which compare Chrysostom, *Hom. 3 in Ephes.*, quoted by Bingham (*Christ. Antt. xv. 4. 2*).

\* So Gerhard: Vestis nuptialis Christus est, qui et sponsus et cibus est in his nuptiis. Christum autem induimus tum *fide* ejus meritum apprehendendo, ut nuditas nostra coram Dei judicio ipsius justitiâ tanquam pretiosâ veste tegatur, tum *sanctâ vitæ conversatione*, quâ ipsius vestigiis insistimus (Rom. xiii. 14), cum Christus non solum nobis datus sit in donum, sed etiam propositus in exemplum:—and Jerome's words are remarkable: Vestem nuptialem, hoc est, vestem supercœlestis hominis,—as he explains the sordid garment as veteris hominis exuvias.—We may compare a passage from the *Shepherd of Hermas* (iii. sim. 9, 18): he sees in his vision some virgins, and asks who they are: it is answered that they represent the chief Christian virtues: Spiritus sancti sunt, non aliter enim homo potest in regnum Dei intrare nisi hæ induerint eum veste suâ. Etenim nil proderit tibi accipere nomen filii Dei, nisi etiam et vestem earum acceperis ab eis.

† This image runs remarkably through the whole of Scripture, its frequent use being a witness for its peculiar fitness. Thus we are bidden to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. xiii. 14), to put off the old, to

ness imputed has become also a righteousness infused, and is in us charity or holiness, or more accurately still, constitutes the complex of all Christian graces as they abide in the man, and show themselves in his life.

The wedding garment then is righteousness in its largest sense, the whole adornment of the new and spiritual man; it includes the faith without which it is impossible to please God, and the holiness without which no man shall see Him, or, like ~~this~~ guest, shall only see Him to perish at his presence: it is ~~the~~ faith which is the root of all graces, the mother of all virtues, and it is likewise those graces and those virtues themselves. Let us contemplate this guest as a self-righteous person, who is making and trusting in a righteousness of his own instead of believing in a righteousness of Christ's, imputed and imparted,—or let us see in him a more ordinary sinner, who with the Christian profession and privileges is yet walking after the lusts of the flesh in unholiness and sin,—in either case the image holds good; he is rejecting something, even the true robe of his spirit, which has been freely given to him at his baptism,\* and which, if he has since let go, he may yet, on the strength of that gift, freely at any moment claim and reclaim; he is a despiser, counting himself good enough merely as he is in himself, in the flesh and not in the spirit, to appear in the presence of God (Prov. xvi. 2). But a time

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put on the new, man (Col. iii. 10; Ephes. iv. 22), to put on the various pieces of the panoply of God (Ephes. vi. 13-16; 1 Thess. v. 8); baptism is a putting on of Christ (Gal. iii. 27). See further, Rom. xiii. 12; Ezek. xvi. 10; Isai. lxi. 10; Ecclus. vi. 31; and Schoettgen (*Hor. Heb.* v. i. p. 699) shows that the mystery of putting on a righteousness from above was not wholly hidden from the Jews—many of the passages which he quotes being truly remarkable. The figure has passed on to the heavenly kingdom; as grace is put on here, so glory there. "He that overcometh, the same *shall be clothed* in white raiment" (Rev. iii. 5; iv. 4; vi. 11; vii. 9; 2 Esd. ii. 39, 45). In the book of Enoch these garments are called *vestes vitæ*. See EISENMENGER'S *Entd. Judenthum* (vol. ii. p. 310), where it is said of the angels, that according to the Jewish tradition, they strip off the grave-clothes from every one who enters Paradise, and clothe him in white and glistening raiment.

\* See one of Schleiermacher's *Taufreden*, in his *Predigten*, vol. iv. p. 787.

arrives when every man will discover that he needs another covering, another array for his soul. It is woe unto him, if, like this guest, he only discovers it, when it is now too late to provide himself with such ; and then suddenly stands confessed to himself in all his moral nakedness and defilement. It was the king's word which struck the intruder speechless ; so it will be the light of God shining round and shining in upon the sinner, which will at the last day reveal to him all the hidden things of his heart, all that evil, of which in the greater part he has hitherto wilfully chosen to be ignorant, but of which now he can remain ignorant no longer. We may well understand how he also, like the unworthy guest, will be "*speechless* ;" that, however forward he may have been in other times to justify himself, in that day his mouth will be stopped ; he will not even pretend to offer any excuse, or to plead any reason why judgment should not proceed against him at once.

The ministering attendants here, who are different both in name and office from the servants who invited and brought in the guests,\* can be no other than the angels, who "shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity" (Matt. xiii. 41, 49 ; Luke xix. 24). These are bidden to "*bind him hand and foot*," which by some is made to mean that upon the sinner the night is come, in which no man can work, that for him all opportunity of doing better is gone by ; though I should rather see in it the sign of the impotence to which in a moment every proud striver against God is reduced.† The hands by whose aid resistance, the

\* Those were δούλοι, these are διάκονοι (John ii. 5, 9). They here appear as *lictors*—that name, from ligare, having allusion to this very function of *binding* the hands and feet of condemned criminals.

† H. de Sto. Victore : Ligatis manibus et pedibus, id est, ablatâ penitus potestate bene operandi : but Grotius better : Notat τὸ ἀμαχον καὶ τὸ ἀφενκρον irrogati divinitus supplicii ; cf. Plato's *Gorgias*, p. 526 E. Taking it in this meaning, Zech. v. 8 will supply an instructive parallel. The woman whose name is "Wickedness" sitting securely in the ephah, or great *measure* of God's judgments, which she has filled, is forcibly thrust down into it ; and its mouth is then stopped with the huge mass of lead, that she may never raise herself again. Jerome

feet by whose help escape, might have been meditated, are alike deprived of all power and motion (Acts xxi. 11). In the command, "*Take him away*," is implied the sinner's exclusion from the Church now glorious and triumphant in heaven, the perfected kingdom of God\* (Matt. xiii. 48; 2 Thess. i. 9). Nor is the penalty merely privative: it is not only this loss of good, but also the presence of evil.† They shall "*cast him into outer darkness*;" called "*outer*" because it lies wholly beyond and external to God's kingdom of light and joy.‡ For as light is contemplated as the element of that kingdom, so whatever is beyond and without that kingdom is darkness—the "*outer darkness*" girdling round the kingdom of light, and into which all fall back, who refusing to walk in the light of God's truth, fail to attain in the end to the light of everlasting life (cf. Wisd. xvii. 21; xviii. 1). On the words following, "*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*," occasion has been taken to say something already.§

The parable terminates like that of the Labourers in the Vineyard with that weighty saying, "*Many are called, but few are chosen*;" the application of which we must not limit here

(in loc). Angelus præcipitem misit in medium amphoræ; . . . ac ne forte rursum elevaret caput, et suâ iniquitate et impietate gauderet, talentum plumbi in modum gravissimi lapidis mittit in os amphoræ, ut impietatem in medio opprimat atque concludat, ne quo modo possit erumpere. The women with wings, who bear away the ephah, will further answer to the servants here; and the outer darkness here to the land of Shinar there, the profane land, whither the vessel and its burden are borne. The whole vision too (v. 6-11) has its similarity to this parable; for that and this speak alike of the cleansing of the Church by judgment-acts of separation upon the sinners in it.

\* It is interesting to compare Zeph. i. 7, 8: "The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are *clothed with strange apparel*" (ἐνδεδµένους ἐνδύματα ἀλλότρια, LXX.).

† AUGUSTINE, *Serm.* xxxi. 5.

‡ Peter Lombard (iv. dist. 50): Exteriores tenebræ erunt, quia tunc peccatores penitus erunt extra Deum . . . Secluduntur penitus a luce Dei.

§ See Meuschen (*N. T. ex Talm. illust.* p. 106) and Pfeiffer (*Opp.* p. 861) for a Jewish parable bearing some resemblance to the present.

to the expulsion of this unworthy guest ; but in the "*called*" and not "*chosen*" must be included those others also who did not so much as seem (which he had done) to embrace the invitation, and who expiated their contumacy in the destruction of themselves and their city. And these words do but state a truth which had long before been finding its fulfilment in the kingdom of God, which, alas ! is always accomplishing there. They were fulfilled in the history of that entire generation which went out of Egypt ; these were all "*called*" to a kingdom, yet were not in the end "*chosen*" to it, since with most of them God was not well pleased, and they died in the wilderness (1 Cor. x. 1-10 ; Heb. iii. 7-19 ; Jude 5). They were fulfilled on a smaller scale in those twelve, to whom it was given the first to see the promised land ; two only drew strength and encouragement from that sight, and they only were "*chosen*" to inherit it (Num. xiv. 23, 24). They found their fulfilment in the thirty and two thousand of Gideon's army ; these all were "*called*," but only three hundred were found worthy, and in the end "*chosen*" to be helpers in and sharers of his victory,—such a sifting and winnowing had there first been (Judg. vii.). They were fulfilled too in a type and figure, when of all the maidens that were brought together to the palace of the Persian king, Esther alone was "*chosen*" by him, and found lasting favour in his sight\* (Esth. ii.).

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\* H de Sto. Victore (*De Arrhâ Animæ*) makes excellent application of Esther's history to the matter in hand : Vide quam multæ electæ sunt, ut una eligeretur, illa scilicet quæ oculis regis formosior et ornatio cæteris videretur. Ministri regis multas eligunt ad cultum, rex ipse unam eligit ad thalamum. Prima electio multarum facta est, secundum regis præceptionem, secunda electio unius facta est, secundum regis voluntatem . . . Rex summus Regis filius venit in hunc mundum (quem ipse creaverat) desponsare sibi uxorem electam, uxorem unicam, uxorem nuptiis regalibus dignam. Sed quia hunc Judæa humilitatis formâ apparentem recipere contempsit, abjecta est. Et missi sunt ministri Regis, Apostoli videlicet, per totum mundum congregare animas, et adducere ad civitatem Regis, id est, ad sanctam Ecclesiam. . . . Multi ergo vocati intrant per fidem Ecclesiam, et ibi sacramenta Christi quasi quædam unguenta et antidota ad reparationem et ad ornatum animarum præparata accipiunt. Sed quia ore



veritatis dicitur, Multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi, non omnes qui ad hunc cultum sunt admissi, ad regnum sunt eligendi; nisi tantum ii, qui sic student se per ista mundare et excolere, ut cum ad Regis præsentiā introducti fuerint, tales inveniantur, quos ipse magis velit eligere quam reprobare. Vide ergo ubi posita es, et intelliges quid facere debes. Posuit enim te Sponsus tuus in triclinio, ubi mulieres ornantur, varia pigmenta et diversas species dedit, cibosque regios de mensâ suâ ministrari tibi præcepit, quidquid ad sanitatem, quidquid ad refectionem, quidquid ad reparandam speciem, quidquid ad augendum decorem valere potest, tribuit. Cave ergo ne ad ~~conferendam~~ ~~conferendam~~ teipsam negligens sis, ne in novissimo tuo, cum in conspectu Sponsi hujus repræsentata fueris, indigna (quod absit) ejus consortio inveniaris. Præpara te, sicut decet sponsam Regis, et sponsam Regis cœlestis, sponsam Sponsi immortalis.

## PARABLE XIII.

### THE TEN VIRGINS.

MATTHEW XXV. 1-13.

“*THEN*”—in that great day of decision, wherein the Lord shall have shown Himself “a swift witness” against the hypocrite and unbeliever (xxiv. 51), He shall in other ways also bring the faith of his servants to the final test, receiving or rejecting them for ever, as they endure or fail under that test; for “*then*,” or at that same time, “*shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*” The circumstances of a marriage among the Jews, so far at least as they supply the groundwork of the present parable, are sufficiently well known, and have been abundantly illustrated by writers on Jewish antiquities; and indeed no less by modern travellers in the East; for the customs alluded to hold in full force to the present day, and form as important a part of the nuptial ceremony now as they did in ancient times. The bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, “the children of the bridechamber” (Matt. ix. 15), “the friends of the bridegroom” (John iii. 29; see Judg. xiv. 11), goes to the house of the bride, and conducts her with pomp and gladness (1 Macc. ix. 37-39) to his own home, or occasionally, should that be too narrow to receive the guests, to some larger apartment provided for the occasion. She is accompanied from her father’s house by her youthful friends and companions\* (Ps. xlv. 15), while other of these, the “virgins” of the parable, at some convenient place meet and join the procession, and enter with the rest of the bridal

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\* The παρθέναι ἑταῖραι of Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.

company into the hall of feasting.\* Such seems to me the exactest account of the ceremony, though by some the circumstances which furnish the machinery of the parable are somewhat differently given. They describe the virgins as meeting the bridegroom, not as he is returning with, but as he is going to fetch, the bride; and as accompanying him first to her home, and only after that to his own. But this supposition has everything against it; besides needlessly complicating the parable, it considerably weakens its moral force; for the impression meant to be left on our minds certainly is, that the joining of the bridal company, for the purpose of passing in with it to the house of feasting, was something to be done promptly and on the instant, and of which if the opportunity were once lost, it could not be recovered. This would not, however, be the case, if there were this going first for the bride, and only after such pause and delay as would have naturally taken place at her house,—a leading of her to her future home. Neither can it be replied, to obviate this objection, that perhaps the nuptial feast was celebrated at the house of *her* parents or friends, for this was as much contrary to all the customs of the Jews (see John ii. 10), as of the Greeks,† and such an assumption would seriously affect the parable in its spiritual application.‡ That the virgins should

\* See Wolf's latest *Journal*, p. 174, in addition to the accounts given by earlier travellers, and quoted by Harmer and Burder. Bingham (*Antt.* xxii. 4. 7) shows the importance which was attached among the early Christians to the leading home of the bride—so that without it the marriage in some legal points of view was not considered as completed.

† See BECKER's *Charikles*, vol. ii. p. 468, in proof that the celebration of the marriage in the bridegroom's house, and not in the bride's, was at least the rule.

‡ One would not lay any stress on the fact that some of the earliest versions read, "went forth to meet the bridegroom *and the bride*," since this reading has been universally rejected,—except as it gives an evidence of the light in which the circumstance was looked at by some who probably were familiar with the ceremony as it actually took place in Palestine or the neighbouring countries. This extract from HUGHES' *Travels in Sicily, &c.* (vol. ii. p. 20) confirms the view first given, in so far as we can argue back from the modern custom to the ancient: "We went to view the nocturnal procession which always accompanies the

be ten in number is not accidental ; exactly so many formed, according to Jewish notions, a company ; which fewer would have failed to do.\* These "*took their lamps*," marriages in the East being celebrated of old, as they are now, invariably at night ; hence the constant mention of lamps and torches as borne by the friends and attendants ; compare 2 Esdr. x. 2 ; and Rev. xviii. 23, where "the light of a candle," and "the voice of the bridegroom and the bride," are so closely joined together. These were used, partly as being actually needed, and partly as adding to the splendour of the scene ; but seem scarcely to have had among the Jews that religious significance which they had in the Greek and Roman marriages,† or even in those of the early Christians. Thus furnished, they "*went forth to meet the bridegroom*."

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bridegroom in escorting his betrothed spouse from the paternal roof to that of her future husband. This consisted of nearly one hundred of the first persons in Joannina, with a great crowd of torch-bearers, and a band of music. *After having received the lady* they returned, but were joined by an equal number of ladies, who paid this compliment to the bride." These "ladies" evidently answer to the virgins of our parable, and they do not join the procession till the bridegroom with his friends have received the bride at her father's house, and are escorting her to her new abode.

\* Thus it was ruled, that wherever there were ten Jews living in one place, there was a congregation, and there a synagogue ought to be built. Much more on the completeness of the number ten may be found collected by Vitranga, *De Synagogâ*, p. 232, seq., and in BÄHR'S *Symbolik d. Mos. Cultus*, vol. i. p. 175.

† Among the Greeks and Romans torches were chiefly used : thus CATULLUS, *Epithal.* 98. *Viden' faces Aureas quatunt comas* ; and again : *Manu Pineam quate tædam* ; so Apuleius, 10 : *Veluti nuptiales epulas obituræ dominæ, coruscis facibus prælucebant* ; and Euripides : *νυμφικαὶ λαμπάδες*. Cf. BECKER'S *Charikles*, vol. ii. p. 465. Among the Jews, lamps fed with oil were more common. The early Christians seem to have used indiscriminately either ; as the expressions, *faculæ nuptiales*, *lucernæ conjugales*, denote. It is only in later Greek that *λαμπάς* came to signify, not a torch or link,—but as here it would seem, a lamp fed with oil, which would at an earlier time have been expressed by *λύχνος* or *ἐλλύχνιον* (see PASSOW, s. v. *λαμπάς*). Yet the mention of oil would not of itself exclude the possibility that these also were torches. For ELSPHINSTONE (*Hist. of India*, vol. i. p. 333) has noted, "The true Hindu way of lighting up is by torches held by men, who feed the flame with oil from a sort of bottle [which would answer to the *ἀγγεῖον* here] constructed for the purpose."

But these virgins, why are they so called, and whom do they represent? There are two mistakes to which the word "*virgins*" has given rise. There is first theirs who argue, All are described as virgins: all, therefore, belong at the inmost centre of their life unto Christ. Some, it is true, are found unready at the last moment, and therefore suffer loss (1 Cor. iii. 13), even a long deferring of their blessedness. Yet the name with which the Lord has honoured all gives assurance that none were ultimately excluded from the kingdom of heaven and the final salvation. They who take this view of the case of the foolish virgins, in general, but not always, connect with it the doctrine of the thousand years' reign of Christ on the earth and a first resurrection; from the blessedness of which they should be shut out for the unreadiness in which they were found, whether at the hour of their death, or of Christ's second coming. Their imperfections, and the much that remained in them unmortified and unpurified still, will have needed the long and painful purging of this exclusion, and of the dreadful persecutions to which all who were thus left out should be exposed: but the root of the matter being in them, they do not forfeit everything, nor fall short of the final bliss of heaven.\* An argument in favour of this

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\* Thus Poiret (*Divin. Econom.* iv. 12, 18, vol. ii. p. 276): Illi qui tempore Adventus in statu quidem gratiæ versabuntur, at multis simul imperfectionibus multisque negligentis implicati, quas huc usque nondum correxerint nec abluerint, hi inquam a regno glorioso Christi in terrâ, dum mille anni periodi hujus effluent, exclusi, portam sibi obserari videbunt. Itaque foris relinquentur in tenebris purgationis, eorumque beatitudo ad resurrectionem usque generalem et post annos mille regni Christi atque sanctorum differetur. Hoc ipsum satis aperte docet parabola Virginum fatuarum. Videmus enim eas ob negligentiam suam a convivio nuptiali fuisse exclusas, etiamsi et virgines fuerint, et lampadem fidei habuerint, et Dominum invocaverint. Janua enim jam clausa numquam iterum aperiebatur dum hoc tempus durabat; quoniam commotio, quæ hoc in mundo futura est antequam finis ejus ac periodorum adveniat, per quam Deus hoc in mundo et in omnibus quæ ibidem adsunt, mutationem hanc gloriosam operabitur (quæ veluti janua erit ac introductio in regnum ejusdem), non nisi semel futura est. Adhuc semel, inquit, et movebo cælum et terram; omnesque qui tum temporis per puritatem perfectam ad gloriam adipiscendam idonei erunt, impressionibus divinæ hujus motionis receptis mutabuntur: at post hoc tempus ad resurrectionem generalem usque, nulla nova com-

conclusion might be drawn from the circumstance that unwise as well as wise are styled "*virgins*," if others sometimes undertook the office of welcoming the bridegroom, and yet the Lord had chosen to give that appellation of *virgins* to these. But seeing that to such the task in the usual order of things appertained, their arguments who, like Stier, press the title of *virgins* which they bear into the support of this interpretation, appear to me to have no force in them at all.

Into the second error Chrysostom, with others, has fallen; who, taking the title "*virgins*" in the literal, while everything else is taken in a figurative sense, limit the application of the parable to those who had made a profession of outward virginity,\* instead of seeing that the virginity here is the

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motio aut mutatio fiet. Tunc enim aderit dies quietis naturæ ac creaturarum omnium quæ in eandem jam erunt introductæ. Abhinc vero oportebit ut Virgines fatuæ, et quicunque nondum veste nuptiali fuerint induti, æternitatem ipsam expectent. Neque enim probabile videtur Virginibus istis negligentibus, in quibus tamen tot jam erant dispositiones bonæ pauperque iis, qui eo tempore nondum rite parati, bona tamen initia jam fecerant, æternum pereundum esse: sed nec probabile est, quancumque illi, post januam semel clausam, præparationem sint adhibitori, Christum iterum ex quiete suâ exiturum, et in gratiam eorum novam crisi ac separationem aliquam peculiarem in naturâ instituturum esse. Von Mayer (*Blätter für höhere Wahrheit*, vol vii. p. 247) interprets the parable in the same manner, and Olshausen.

\* Augustine (*Serm.* xciii. 2) warns his hearers that the parable is not to be limited to such, but belongs to all souls, quæ habent Catholicam fidem, et habere videntur bona opera in Ecclesiâ Dei, and he quotes 2 Cor. xi. 2. In another place he says, Virginitas cordis, fides incorrupta;—and Jerome (*Comm. in Matt.* in loc.): Virgines appellantur, quia gloriuntur in unius Dei notitiâ, et mens eorum idololatriæ turbâ non constupratur; and again (*Adv. Jovin.* 2): Decem virgines non totius generis humani, sed sollicitorum et pigrorum exempla sunt, quorum alteri semper Domini præstolantur adventum, alteri somno et inertie se dantes, futurum judicium non putant. There is apparently Chrysostom's limitation of the parable, in the use made of it in a prayer for the consecration of nuns, given by Mabillon (*Liturg. Gall.* iii. p. 311), where, among other allusions to the parable, this occurs: Regalem januam cum sapientibus Virginibus licenter introeant. Yet this may be no more than an adaptation. Tertullian (*De Animâ*, 18) mentions a singular use, or rather abuse, which some of the Gnostics made of this parable: The five foolish virgins are the five senses, foolish inasmuch as they are easily deceived, and often give fallacious notices; while the five wise are the reasonable powers, which have the capacity of apprehending ideas.

profession of a pure faith, the absence of spiritual fornication, of apostasy from the one God. This all the virgins have; in them are included all who profess to be waiting for the Son of God from heaven, to love his appearing; all who with their lips join in the confession, "I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead," and who do not by their deeds openly deny this hope; all are included, who would desire to include themselves in the number of his believing people. This they have all in common, that they confess to the same Lord, they profess to have the same hope in Him,—as is set out to us in the fact of all the virgins alike taking their lamps, and going forth to meet the bridegroom.

But, it is immediately added, "*five of them were wise, and five of them were foolish.*" The numbers make nothing to the case; only the division is essential. They are not distinguished into good and bad, but, as the hearers at Matt. vii. 25-27, into "*wise*" and "*foolish*;" for as a certain degree of good-will toward the truth is assumed there in the foolish, as evidenced in their willingness to hear, and in the superstructure, however weak, which they raise, so on the part of these in their going forth even with the intention of meeting the bridegroom. We have them described—the wise, 2 Pet. i. 5-8, and the foolish, 2 Pet. i. 9. But wherein did the folly of these, and the wisdom of those, consist? The parable supplies the answer. "*They that were foolish took their lamps, but took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*"

It is evident that here is the turning-point of the parable; the success of an interpreter must depend on his rightly explaining what the having, or not having, a reserved supply of oil may mean. Here again we meet with a controversy between the Romanists and the Reformers, not different from that which they held in respect of the wedding garment. The latter asserted that what these virgins lacked was the living principle of faith; what they had were the outer deeds of a Christian profession; these were their lamps shining before men; but they wanted the inner spirit of life, the living

faith; this was the oil which they should have had, if their lamps were to burn bright before Christ in the day of his appearing.\* The Romanist reverses the whole, and affirms that what they had was faith, but then it was a faith which, not having works, was “dead, being alone” (Jam. ii. 17); they were not careful to maintain good works, to nourish the lamp of faith, which they bore in sight of men, with deeds of light done for and in the sight of God; they did not by well-doing stir up the grace of God that was in them, and so through this sluggishness and sloth the grace which they did not use was taken from them; their lamps burned dim, and at last were wholly extinguished, and they had not wherewith to revive them anew.†

It is needless to observe in what different senses the two parties use the word *faith*,—the Romanist as the outward profession of the truth,—the Reformers as the root and living principle of Christian life.‡ If it were not for those diverse uses of the same term, the two interpretations would not be

\* This is very much Augustine's interpretation (*Ep* cxl. 33; *Serm.* cxlix. 11): *Lampades bona sunt opera . . . et ipsa quæ etiam coram hominibus lucet laudabilis conversatio, sed magni interest quâ mentis intentione fiat. . . . Quid est ergo ferre oleum secum, nisi habere conscientiam placendi Deo de bonis operibus, et non ibi finem gaudii sui ponere, si homines laudent* Cocceius explains the oil in the vessels thus, *Doctrina Spiritûs Sancti fidem pascens in perpetuum ut non deficiat*; and Cajetan, a Romanist expositor, consents to this interpretation; his words are so excellent that I will quote them: *In hoc differunt operantes bona opera, quod aliqui habent testimonium suæ bonitatis foris tantum in ipsis operibus bonis: intus enim non sentiunt se diligere Deum in toto corde, se pœnitere peccatorum quia sunt offensæ Dei, se diligere proximum propter Deum. Alii autem operantur sic bona, ut et ipsa opera lucentia testimonium foris reddant boni animi, et intus in conscientia propriâ ipse Spiritus Sanctus testificetur spiritui eorum quod filii Dei sunt. Sentiunt enim in corde toto se diligere Deum, pœnitere propter Deum, diligere proximum et seipsum propter Deum, et breviter Deum esse sibi rationem amandi, sperandi, timendi, gaudendi, tristandi et breviter operandi intus et extra: hoc est enim oleum in vasis propriis.*

† This view too has its supporters among the Fathers: thus Jerome (in loc.): *Non habent oleum, quæ videntur simili quidem fide Dominum confiteri, sed virtutum opera negligunt.* Cf. ORIGEN, in *Matth. Tract.* 32.

‡ As Augustine, when he says: *Animæ tuæ anima fides.*



opposed to, or exclude, one another,—certainly would not be incapable of a fair reconciliation.\* For we may equally contemplate the foolish virgins unprovided with oil, as those going through a round of external duties, without life, without love, without any striving after inward conformity to the law of God, to whom religion is all husk and no kernel; or again as those who, confessing Christ with their lips, and holding fast the form of the truth, are yet not diligent in the work of the Lord, in acts of charity, of humility, and self-denial; and who therefore by that law which decrees that from him who hath not shall be taken even that which he hath, do gradually lose that grace which they had, and find that they have lost it altogether, at the decisive moment when it were need that they should have it in largest measure. It is clear that whatever is merely outward in the Christian profession is the lamp—whatever is inward and spiritual is the oil reserved in the vessels. When we contemplate with St. James the faith as the body, and the works as that which witnesses for an informing vivifying soul, then the faith is the lamp, the works the oil in the vessels; but when, on the other hand, we contemplate with St. Paul the works as only having a value from the living principle of faith out of which they spring, then the works are the lamp, and the faith the oil which must feed it. Yet in either case, before we have fully exhausted the meaning of the oil, we must get beyond both the works and the faith to something higher than either, the informing Spirit of God which prompts the works and quickens the faith, and of which Spirit oil is ever in Scripture the standing symbol (Exod. xxx. 22-33; Zech. iv. 2, 12; Acts x. 38; Heb. i. 9).

But under whatever aspect we regard the relation between the oil in the lamps and in the vessels, the purpose of the parable is, as we learn from the Lord's concluding words, to

\* For instance, who would refuse to accede to the explanation given by Gerhard? *Per lampades accensas externa oris professio et exterior pietatis species: per oleum vero in vasis interior cordis justitia, vera fides, sincera caritas, vigilantia, prudentia, quæ solius Dei, non autem hominum oculis obvia, intelliguntur.*

impress upon the members of his Church their need of vigilance. Regarded in the one view, it is a warning that they be careful to maintain good works, that they be not weary of well doing, that they be not of the number of those who are satisfied with saying, "Lord, Lord," while they do not the things that He says. Regarded under the other aspect, it is a warning that they be watchful over their inward state,—over their affections,—over all which, withdrawn from the eyes of man, is seen only of God;—that they seek to be glorious *within*, to have a continued supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus in their innermost hearts, to approve themselves before God,\* as well as to show a fair and unblamable conversation before the world. In either case, we must remember, and it adds much to the solemnity of the lesson, that by the foolish virgins are meant,—not hypocrites, not self-conscious dissembles, much less the openly profane and ungodly,—but the negligent in prayer, the slothful in work, and all those whose scheme of a Christian life is laid out to satisfy the eyes of men, and not to please Him who seeth in secret. Nor is it

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\* This is a point which is brought out with great frequency and urgency by the old expositors, by Augustine, *Ep.* cxl. 81, and again *Serm.* xciii. 8, by Gregory the Great, *Hom.* 12 in *Evang.*; and with much beauty by the author of a sermon found among the works of St. Bernard (vol. ii p. 722): *Oleum in lampade est opus bonum in manifestatione, sed dum videtur a proximis caritas operis, dum mirantur et laudant, extollitur plerumque et adsurgit elatus animus operantis, et dum in se et non in Domino gloriatur, lumen lampadis adnullatur, et carens fomento congruo lampas, quæ coram hominibus clare lucet, coram Domino tenebratur. Prudentes vero virgines præter oleum quod in lampadibus habent, oleum aliud in vasis reponunt. quia nimirum sanctæ animæ dum sponsi sui præstolantur adventum, dum toto desiderio ei clamant quotidie, Adveniat regnum tuum, præter illa opera quæ proximis lucent ad Dei gloriam et videntur, aliqua in occulto, ubi solus Pater videt, opera faciunt. . . . Hæc est gloria filiæ regis ab intus, dum plus de oleo quod in vasis conscientiæ dilucescit, quam de eo quod lucet de foris gloriatur: periisse æstimat omne quod cernitur, nec id dignum judicat remuneratione, quod favores hominum prosequuntur. Latenter igitur quæ prævalet, operatur, petit secretum, orationibus pulsat cælum, fundit lacrymas testes amoris, . . . hæc est gloria, sed ab intus, sed invisita, filiæ regis et amicæ. Hoc oleum fatuæ virgines non habent, quia nisi ad nitorem vanæ gloriæ et favorem hominum bona non operantur. Hoc oleum in quo prudentes confidunt, in abditis conscientiarum vasculis reponunt.*

that they have actually no oil at all; they have some, but not enough; their lamps, when they first go forth, are evidently burning, else they could not speak of them as on the point of expiring just as the bridegroom was approaching. In fact, having no oil provided in the vessels is exactly parallel to having no deepness of earth (Matt. xiii. 5); the seed springs up till the sun scorches it; the lamps burn on till their oil is exhausted through the length of the bridegroom's delay. In each case there is something more than a merely external profession, conscious to itself that it is nothing besides; it is not that there was no faith, but rather that there was only that *fides temporaria* which could not endure temptation, nor survive delay,—the Christian life in manifestation, but not fed from deep internal fountains. *They*, on the other hand, are like the wise virgins, who recognize the possibility that the bridegroom may tarry long, that the Church may not very soon, perhaps not in their days, enter into its glory; who, therefore, foresee that they may have a long life to live of toil and self-denial, before they shall be called to cease from their labours, before the kingdom shall come unto them; and who consequently feel that it is not a few warm excited feelings which will carry them successfully through all this, and enable them to endure unto the end; for such are but as a fire among straw, which will quickly blaze up, and as quickly be extinguished. They feel that principles as well as feelings must be engaged in the work, that their first good impulses and desires will carry them but a very little way, unless they be revived, strengthened, and purified, by a continual supply of the Spirit of God. If the bridegroom were to come at once, perhaps it might be another thing; but their wisdom is that, since it may possibly be otherwise, they see their need of making provision against the contingency.

“*While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*” This tarrying of the bridegroom we may number among the many hints which Christ gave, that the time of his return might possibly be delayed very far beyond the expectation of his disciples. It was a hint and no more; if more had been

given, if He had said plainly that He would not come for many centuries, then the first ages of the Church would have been placed at a manifest disadvantage, being deprived of that powerful motive to holiness and diligence supplied to each generation of the faithful by the possibility of the Lord's return in their time. It is not that He desires each succeeding generation to believe that He will certainly return in their time; for He does not desire our faith and our practice to be founded on an error, as, in that case, the faith and practice of all generations except the last would be. But it is a necessary element of the doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ, that it should be possible at any time, that no generation should consider it improbable in theirs.\* The love, the earnest longing of those first Christians made them to assume that coming to be close at hand. In the strength and joy of this faith they lived and suffered, and when they died, the kingdom was indeed come unto them.† As a further reason why the Church should not have been acquainted with the precise time of her Lord's return, it may be added, that it was in itself, no doubt, undetermined. Prophecy is no fatalism,‡ and it was always open to every age by faith and prayer to hasten that coming, so that the Apostle speaks of the faithful not merely as looking for, but also *hasting*, the coming of the day of God (2 Pet. iii. 12); with which we may compare Acts iii. 19, "Repent ye, . . . *that* the times of refreshing may come;" these "times of refreshing" being evidently identical with "the times of restitution of all things" (ver. 21),

\* Augustine: *Latet ultimus dies, ut observetur omnis dies*; and Tertullian (*De Animâ*, 33): *Ut pendulâ expectatione sollicitudo fidei probetur, semper diem observans, dum semper ignorat, quotidie timens, quod quotidie sperat.*

† Yet Augustine, claiming a right to dissent from a scheme of prophetic interpretation current in his day, which made the end of the world to be already instant, says very beautifully (*Ep* excix. 5): *Non ergo ille diligit Adventum Domini, qui illum asserit propinquare, aut ille qui asserit non propinquare; sed ille potius qui eum sive prope sive longe sit, sinceritate fidei, firmitate spei, ardore caritatis expectat.*

‡ In Augustine's words, *Prædixi, non fixi.*

the glorious setting up of the kingdom of Christ: and we find the same truth, that the quicker or tardier approach of that time is conditional, elsewhere declared in clearest terms (2 Pet. iii. 9). In agreement with these passages, we pray that it may please God "to accomplish the number of his elect, and to *hasten* his kingdom." But while the matter was left by the wisdom of God in this uncertainty, it was yet important that after the expectations of the first ages of the Church had proved to be ungrounded, those who examined the Scriptures should find intimations there that this might probably be the case.\* Of these intimations there are many, and this present passage is one.

But to return; the bridegroom tarrying, the virgins "*all slumbered and slept.*" The steps by which they fell into deep sleep are here marked; first they nodded the head or slumbered, and next they slept profoundly. Some have understood by this sleeping of *all*, a certain unreadiness that will be found in the whole Church, a certain acquiescence in the present time and in the present things, even among the faithful themselves,—though with this difference, that *their* unreadiness will be remediable, and easily removed; its removal being actually signified by the trimming and replenishing of their lamps; while that of the others will be beyond remedy.† Augustine‡ proposes, but it is only to reject, this interpretation, that by the sleeping of all is signified the love of all in some measure growing cold; for he asks, Why were these wise admitted, unless for the very reason that their love had *not* grown cold?

\* Augustine (*Ep.* cxcix. 5): Ne forte cum transisset tempus, quo eum crediderant esse venturum, et venisse non cernerent, etiam cetera fallaciter sibi promitti arbitantes, et de ipsa mercede fidei desperarent.

† So Cocceius: Significat securitatem, quæ Ecclesiam Christianam post primam quasi vigiliam noctis persecutionum cum pace invasit; and Grotius, in this view following the *Auct. Oper. Imperf.*, quotes in confirmation Jam. iii. 2; Rom. xiii. 2. Maldonatus gives this explanation in a form somewhat modified, and popular at the present day: Dormire interpretor desinere de adventu Domini cogitare.

‡ *Serm.* xciii. 5; *Ep.* cxl. 32.

But there is, he says, a sleep common to all, the sleep of death, which by these words is indicated: and this is the explanation of Chrysostom, Theophylact, Jerome, Gregory the Great, and nearly all the ancient interpreters. It seems, indeed, far preferable to that which understands by this slumbering and sleeping, the negligences and omissions of even the best Christians. Our Lord would scarcely have given, as it were, this allowance for a certain degree of negligence, seeing that with all the most earnest provocations to diligence, we are ever inclined to indulge in spiritual sloth. Least of all would He have so done in a parable, of which the very aim and moral is, that we be always ready, that we be *not* taken unprepared.

But perhaps by this slumbering and sleeping more may not be meant than that all, having taken such measures as they counted needful to enable them to meet the bridegroom as they would wish, calmly and securely awaited his approach.\* For, indeed, the fitnesses of the parabolic narration, which required to be consulted, seem to demand such a circumstance as this. Had the foolish virgins been in a condition to mark the lapse of time, and the gradual waning of their lamps, they, knowing that they had not wherewith to replenish them, would naturally have bestirred themselves, before the decisive moment arrived, to procure a new supply. The fact that they fell asleep, and were only awakened by the cry of the advancing bridal company, gives,—and scarcely anything else would give,—an easy and natural explanation of their utter and irremediable destitution of oil at the moment when it most needed that they should have it in abundance. And had the wise virgins not slept as well, had they been represented as watching while the others were sleeping, it would have seemed like a lack of love upon their parts, not to have warned their companions of the lapse of time and the

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\* Hilary (*Comm. in Matt.* xxvii.) unites this meaning and the preceding: *Exspectantium somnus credentium quies est, et in penitentiae tempore mors temporalis universorum.*

increasing dimness with which their lamps were burning, while yet a remedy was within their reach.\*

"*At midnight,*" and not till then, "*there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him:*"—this cry we may suppose to have been made either by a part of the retinue running before, or by the jubilant multitude, who, even till that late hour, had been waiting to see the passage of the procession through the streets, and thus testified their lively sympathy in what was going forward. But the spiritual signification of the cry at midnight has been variously given. Most are agreed to find an allusion to "the voice of the archangel and the trump of God" (1 Thess. iv. 16), which shall be heard when the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. Some, however, explain the cry as coming from watchers in the Church, such as shall not be altogether lacking in the last times,—by whom the signs of the times have been observed, and who will proclaim aloud the near advent of the Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom, when He draws nigh, accompanied by the angels, the friends of the bridegroom, and leading home his bride, the triumphant Church, and looking to be met and greeted by the members of his Church yet militant on earth, themselves a part of that mystical bride,† that so He may bring her to the glorious mansion, the house of everlasting joy and gladness which He has prepared for her.—And this cry is "*at midnight.*" It was an opinion current among the later Jews, that the Messiah would come suddenly at midnight, as their forefathers had gone out from Egypt, and obtained their former deliverance, at that very hour (Exod. xii. 29); from which belief Jerome‡ supposes the apostolic tradition of not dismissing the people on Easter eve till the middle night was past, to have been derived. They waited till then, that they

\* STORR, *De Par. Christi*, in his *Opusc. Acad.* vol. i. p. 133.

† Augustine (*Quæst.* lxxxiii qu. 59): *Ex ipsis virginibus constat, ea quæ dicitur sponsa, tanquam si omnibus Christianis in Ecclesiam concurrentibus filii ad matrem concurrere dicantur, cum ex ipsis filiis congregatis constet ea quæ dicitur mater* (see Rev. xix. 7, 9).

‡ *Comm. in Matt.* in loc.

might be found already gathered together, if the Lord should come, who was twice to glorify that night, first, by in it resuming his life, and again, by assuming in it the dominion of the world: and not a few have found in the passage before us an argument for supposing that the Lord's coming would actually take place at the middle night. But it is not necessary to suppose that midnight is here named for any other reason than because that is the time when commonly deep sleep falls upon men, when therefore such an occurrence as that in the parable would be least looked for, accounted least likely to happen; and because thus the unexpectedness of that day of the Lord which "cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. v. 2), is in a lively manner set out.\*

But when the cry was heard, "*then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps*;"† whereupon the foolish discovered, to their dismay, that theirs were at the point of expiring, and that they had not wherewith to replenish them. In other words, every one at the last prepares to give an account of his works, inquires into the foundation of his faith,‡ seriously searches whether his life has been one which will have praise not merely of men, for that he now feels will avail nothing, but also of God. Many put off this trying of the grounds of their faith and hope to the last moment, nay, some manage to defer it, with all the miserable discoveries which will then be made, beyond the grave, even till the day of judgment,—but

\* Augustine (*Serm. xciii* 6): Quid est mediâ nocte? Quando non speratur, quando omnino non creditur;—and Jerome: Subito enim, quasi intempestâ nocte, et securis omnibus Christiresonabit adventus.

† Ward (*View of the Hindoos*, vol. ii p. 29), describing the parts of a marriage ceremony in India of which he was an eye-witness, says: "After waiting two or three hours, at length near midnight it was announced as in the very words of Scripture, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession: *some of them had lost their lights, and were unprepared; but it was then too late to seek them*; and the cavalcade moved forward."

‡ Augustine: Rationem præparant reddere de operibus suis. Cocceius: Quivis homo apud se fidei suæ soliditatem requisivit.



further it cannot be deferred. When the day of Christ comes, it will be impossible for any to remain ignorant any longer of their true state, for that day will be a revelation of the hidden things of men, of things hitherto hidden even from themselves; a flood of light will then pour into all the darkest corners of all hearts, and show every man to himself exactly as he is; so that self-deception will be possible no longer.

When the foolish virgins turn in their extremity to their wiser companions, saying, "*Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out;*"\* the request, with the refusal which it calls out,—like the discourse between Abraham and Dives,—are of course only the clothing and outer garb of the truth; but of truth how important!—no other indeed than this, that we shall look in vain from men for that grace which God only can supply, that we shall be miserably disappointed, if we think thus to borrow in an easy lazy way that which must be *bought*,—won, that is, by earnest prayer and diligent endeavour. The answer of the wise, "*Not so; † lest there be not enough for us and you,*" has its lesson also. Every man

\* The hand-lamp was naturally small, and would not contain a supply of oil for very many hours of continuous burning: even the lamps used at a festival, which would be larger, needed to be replenished, if kept burning long into the night. Thus Petronius, 22: *Trichniarchus experrectus lucernis occidentibus oleum infuderat*; see also 70. Such *lucernæ occidentes* are the lamps here, lamps failing and "*going out*," as it is in the margin of our Bibles, not already "*gone out*," for then the foolish virgins would not merely have needed to trim and feed them, but must have asked from their companions also permission to kindle them anew, of which yet we hear nothing. The trimming itself implied two things, the infusion of fresh oil, and the removing of whatever had gathered round, and was clogging, the wick. For the last purpose there was often a little instrument that hung by a slender chain from the lamp itself—pointed for the removing of the snuffs (the putres fungi) from around the flame, and furnished with a little hook at the side by which the wick, when need was, might be drawn further out. This instrument is sometimes found still attached to the bronze lamps discovered in sepulchres. In Virgil's *Moretum*, 11: *Et producit acu stupas humore carentes* (see BECKER's *Gallus*, vol. ii. p. 205, seq.).

† The answer in the Greek is strongly elliptical, as in a moment of earnestness and haste. Bengel: *Abrupta oratio, festinationi illi convenientis*. On the spirit of the answer of the wise virgins, as regards themselves, Augustine remarks: *Non desperatione dictum est, sed*

must live by his own faith. There is that which one can communicate to another, and make himself, the richer ; as one who gives another a light, has not therefore less light, but walks henceforth in the light of two torches instead of one : but there is also that which, being divine, is in its very nature incommunicable from man to man, which can be obtained only from above, and which every man must obtain for himself ; one can indeed point out to another where he is to dig for the precious ore, but after all is said, each one must bring it up for himself and by efforts of his own.

The wise virgins did all which they could for their unfortunate companions ; they gave them the best counsel that under the circumstances was possible, when they said, "*Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*" They bid them turn to the dispensers of heavenly grace, to those whom God has appointed in the Church as channels of his gifts ; or, as some would explain it, to the prophets and Apostles, that they may learn from their words and teaching how to revive the work of God in their souls, if yet there should be time. Sometimes the words have been understood as ironically spoken ;\* but how much more consistent with their character whom the wise virgins represent, to see in them a counsel of love, of that love which emphatically "*hopeth all things,*"—an exhortation to their fellows that they trust not in man, but betake themselves, if this may yet be, to the sources from which true effectual grace can alone be obtained, that they seek even at this last to revive the work of grace in their hearts.—Nor can we refuse to see in the reason which they give for declining to comply with the others' request, namely, "*lest there be not enough for us and you,*" an argument against works of supererogation, however the Romish expositors may resist the drawing of any such conclusion from the words. "The

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sobriâ et piâ humilitate ; and Chrysostom (*De Pœnit. Hom. 3*) : Οὐ δὲ ἀσπλαγχνίαν τοῦτο ποιῶσαι, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ πτερόν τοῦ καιροῦ.

\* Augustine (*Serm. xciii. 8*) : Non consulentium, sed irradientium est ista responsio ; and Luther quotes, *Justi ridebunt in interitu impiorum.*

righteous shall scarcely be saved;"\* the wise virgins do not feel that they have anything over, which, as not needing for themselves, they may transfer to others; happy if their own lamps have been kept in such brightness that they may be themselves allowed to make part of the bridal company, and to enter with those that are entering into the joy of the festal chamber.†

So much is granted them; while the others were absent, seeking to repair their past neglect, "*the bridegroom came, and*

\* Augustine (*Ep* cxi. 34): Petunt a sapientibus oleum, nec inveniunt, nec accipiunt, illis respondentibus se nescire, utrum vel sibi sufficiat ipsa conscientia, quâ expectant misericordiam sub illo Judice, qui cum in throno sederit, quis gloriabitur castum se habere cor, aut quis gloriabitur mundum se esse a peccato, nisi superexultet misericordia judicio?

† Tertullian (*De Pudic.* 22) makes good application of this part of the parable, when opposing the libelli pacis which the confessors in the African church gave to the lapsed: Sufficiat martyri propria delicta purgâsse Ingrati aut superbi est in alios quoque spargere, quod pro magno fuerit consecutus Quis alienam mortem suâ solvit nisi solus Dei filius? . . . Proinde qui illum æmularis donando delicta, si nihil ipse deliquisti, plane patere pro me. Si vero peccator es, quomodo oleum faculæ tuæ sufficere et tibi et mihi poterit?—Gurtler (*Syst. Theol. Proph.* p. 711) gives a strange story from Melchior Adamus, which witnesses how strongly it was once felt that there was here an argument against all hoping in man and in the merits of men rather than in God. The words are these: "There was, A.D. 1322, exhibited at Eisenach before the Margrave Frederick of Misnia, the mystery concerning the five wise and as many foolish virgins. The wise were St. Mary, St. Catherine, St. Barbara, St. Dorothy, and St. Margaret To these come the foolish, seeking that they will impart to them of their oil—that is, as the actor explained it, intercede with God for them that they also may be admitted to the marriage—that is, to the kingdom of heaven. What happens? the wise absolutely deny that they can communicate aught. Then a sad spectacle began; the foolish knocked, they wept, they were instant in prayer; but all profited not a jot, they were bidden to depart and buy oil. Which when that prince saw and heard, he is said to have been so amazed, that he fell into a grievous and dangerous sickness. 'What,' he exclaimed, 'is our Christian faith, if neither Mary nor any other saint can be persuaded to intercede for us?' From this sadness an apoplexy had its rise, of which he died the fourth day after, and was buried at Eisenach." This incident is told with some differences in CARLYLE'S *Miscellanies*, vol. ii. p. 415. It may be observed here that this parable was a very favourite subject for the mysteries in the middle ages (see DU MERIL'S *Poésies populaires Latines*, p. 138).

*they that were ready,"*\* they whose lamps were burning, having been fed anew from their vessels, "*went in with him to the marriage,† and the door was shut ;*" shut as much for the security and joy without interruption of those within,‡ as for the lasting exclusion of those without (Gen. vii. 16; Rev. iii. 12). "What door?" exclaims the author of an ancient homily on this parable: "That which now is open to them coming from the east and from the west, that they may sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,—that Door which saith, Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out. Behold how it is now open, which shall then be closed for evermore. Murderers come, and they are admitted,—publicans and harlots come, and they are received,—unclean and adulterers and robbers, and whosoever is of this kind, come, and the open door doth not deny itself to them ; for Christ, the Door, is infinite to pardon, reaching beyond every degree and every amount of wickedness. But then what saith He? The door is shut. No one's penitence,—no one's prayer,—no one's groaning shall any more be admitted. That door is shut, which received Aaron after his idolatry,—which admitted David after his adultery, after his homicide,—which not only did not repel Peter after his three-fold denial, but delivered its keys to be guarded by him" (Luke xvi. 26).

*"Afterwards came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord,*

\* In the *Parke Avoth* there is this comparison: *Seculum hoc simile est vestibulo, et seculum futurum triclinio. Præpara teipsum in vestibulo, ut ingredi possis in triclinium.*

† In Milton's *Sonnet to a Virtuous Young Lady* he has magnificently absorbed into his verse the whole imagery of this latter portion of the parable :

"Thy care is fixed, and zealously attends  
To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light,  
And hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be sure,  
Thou, when the Bridegroom with his feastful friends  
Passes to bliss in the mid hour of night,  
Hast gained thy entrance, virgin wise and pure."

‡ For in Augustine's beautiful language the heavenly kingdom is one, *ubi non intrat inimicus, nec amicus exit.*

*open to us.*" It is not that they have now obtained oil, but, having sought it in vain, they come beseeching that the absence of it on their parts may be overlooked; as those seeking for mercy, when now the time of judgment has arrived.\* In the title "*Lord,*" by which they address the bridegroom, they claim to stand in a near and intimate relation to him; as in the "*Lord, Lord,*" twice repeated, is an evidence—not, as some say, of their vain confidence—but rather of the earnestness with which they now claim admission (Gen. xxii. 11; Exod. iii. 4; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Matt. xxvii. 46; Luke viii. 24; x. 41; xxii. 31; Acts ix. 4); of the misgiving which already possesses them, lest the shut door should refuse to open again; lest it should now be useless to ask this. Even so it proves;† for in reply to their request they hear from within the sentence of their exclusion: "*Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*" It is not that the bridegroom disclaims any outward knowledge of them, but he does not *know* them in that sense in which the Good Shepherd *knows* his sheep, and is known of them. This knowledge is of necessity reciprocal, so that Augustine's remark, seeming a slight, is indeed a very profound one, namely, that "*I know you not,*" is nothing else than, "*Ye know not Me.*"‡

The exclusion of the foolish virgins from the marriage feast is, if this interpretation be correct, not temporary; but, so far as our horizon reaches, a final one. I know that there are very many who regard it in a different light, as who would

\* AUGUSTINE, *Ep.* cxi. 35.

† In them that solemn line of the old church hymn must find itself true:

Plena luctu caret fructu sera pœnitentia.

‡ We have at Luke xiii. 25 the same image of the excluded vainly seeking an entrance, though it appears with important modifications. It is there the master, who has appointed a set time in the evening by which all his servants shall have returned home. When the hour arrives, he rises up and bars his doors, and those of the household who have lingered and arrived later cannot persuade him again to open them. They remain without, and he declares the fellowship between them and him has never been more than an outward one, and now is broken altogether.

not gladly do? and the views of some of these have been touched on in this exposition; but for myself I must still find the sterner and severer view of the parable to approve itself to me as the truer (Isai. lxx. 13). On this their exclusion Bengel observes, that there are four classes of persons; those to whom "an entrance is ministered *abundantly* into the kingdom," entering as with sails set into the haven; those again that are saved, as shipwrecked mariners that hardly reach the shore: and on the other side, there are those who travel plainly on the broad way to destruction, whose sins go before them to judgment; while again, there are such as, though they seemed not "far off from the kingdom of God," yet miss it after all; of this last class were these five foolish virgins; and their fate, who were so near a crown and a kingdom, and yet missed them after all, he observes with truth, must always appear the most miserable of all. Lest that may be our lot, the Lord says to us,—for what He said to his hearers then, He says unto all, to his Church and to every member of it in every age,—"*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour;*"\* and, while ye do not know, the only certain way to be ready upon *that* day, is that you be ready upon *every* day:" the parable teaching that unreadiness upon that day is unreadiness for ever; the doom of the foolish virgins proclaiming that the work, which should have been the work of a life, cannot be huddled up into a moment. "*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.*"

This parable will obtain a wider application if we keep in memory that, while it is quite true that there is one great coming of the Lord at the last, yet not the less does He come in all the great crises of his Church, at each new manifestation of his Spirit; and at each of these too there is a separation, among those who are called by his name, into wise and foolish,

\* What is more in this verse should have no place in the text, and has probably been brought into it from the parallel passages, such as Matt. xxiv. 44. It is excluded by Lachmann.

## THE TEN VIRGINS.

as they are spiritually alive or dead. Thus at Pentecost, when by his Spirit He returned to his Church, He came: the prudent in Israel went in with Him to the feast, the foolish tarried without. Thus too He came at the Reformation: those that had oil went in; those that had empty lamps, the form of godliness without the power, tarried without. Each of these was an example of that which should be more signally fulfilled at the end.

It remains to say a few words on the relation in which this parable stands to that of the Marriage of the King's Son, and to account for the fact that in that the unworthy guest actually finds admission to the marriage supper (Matt. xxii. 11), and is only from thence cast out, while in this the foolish virgins are not so much as admitted to the feast. It might indeed be answered, that this is accidental,—that the differences grow out of the different structure of the two parables; but by such answers every thing that is distinctive in the parables may be explained away: and we treat them with greater respect, when we look for some deeper-lying reason. The explanation seems to be, that the marriage festivities there spoken of are different from the present. In Gerhard's words, "Those are celebrated in this life in the Church militant, these at the last day in the Church triumphant. To those even they are admitted who are not adorned with the wedding garment, but to these only they to whom it is granted that they should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Rev. xix. 8); to those men are called by the trumpet of the Gospel, to these by the trumpet of the Archangel. To those who enters can again go out from them, or be cast out; who is once introduced to these, never goes out, nor is cast out from them any more: wherefore it is said, '*The door was shut.*'"—We may finish the consideration of this exquisite parable with the words in which Augustine concludes a homily\* upon it:

\* *Serm. xciii. 10.*—Besides the passage referred to p. 251, note, there is another in Luke (xii. 35-38) offering many analogies to this

"Now we labour, and our lamps fluctuate among the gusts and temptations of the present world; only let us give heed that our flame burn in such strength, that the winds of temptation may rather fan the flame than extinguish it."\*

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parable, though with differences as well. The faithful appear there not as virgins but as servants—that is, their active labour for their Lord is more brought out, and they are waiting for Him, not as here, when He shall come to, but when He shall return from, the wedding (*πότε ἀναλίσσει ἐκ τῶν γάμων*), from the heavenly bridal, the union with the Church in heaven. The warning to a preparedness to meet Him clothes itself under images not exactly similar. They must have their loins girt up (Jer. i. 17; 1 Pet. i. 13), and their lights burning—that is, they must be prompt and succinct to wait upon Him, and his home must be bright and beaming with lights. The festival must be prepared which should celebrate his return, and his admission must be without delay, and then that which they have prepared for Him shall indeed prove to have been prepared for themselves; "He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." What He did at the paschal supper (John xiii. 4) shall prove but a prophecy of what He shall repeat in a more glorious manner at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

\* In early times and in the middle ages this parable was a very favourite subject of Christian art. Munter (*Sinnbildern d. Alt. Christ.* vol. ii p. 91) mentions a picture of the five wise virgins in the cemetery of the church of St. Agnes at Rome, probably of very early date; and Caumont (*Archit. Relig. au Moyen Age*, p. 345), describing the representations of the Last Judgment so often found over the great western door of a cathedral, says: On rencontre parfois dans les voussures des portes dix statuettes de femmes, les unes tenant soigneusement à deux mains une lampe en forme de coupe; les autres tenant négligemment d'une seule main la même lampe renversée. Le sculpteur a toujours eu soin de placer les Vierges sages à la droite du Christ, et du côté des bienheureux; les Vierges folles à sa gauche, du côté des réprouvés. For many further details of interest, see DIDRON's *Manuel d'Iconographie Chrétienne*, p. 217, sqq.



## PARABLE XIV.

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### THE TALENTS.

MATTHEW XXV. 14-30.

WHILE the virgins were represented as *waiting* for their Lord, we have here the servants *working* for Him: there the inward spiritual life of the faithful was described, here his external activity. There, by the end of the foolish virgins, we were warned against declensions and decays in the inward life of the soul; here, by the doom of the slothful servant, against sluggishness in our outward vocation and work. That parable enforced the need of keeping the heart with all diligence; this of giving all diligence also in our outward service, if we would be found of Christ in peace at the day of his appearing. It is not, therefore, without good reason that they appear in their actual order, that of the Virgins first, and of the Talents following, since it is the sole condition of a profitable outward activity for the kingdom of God, that the life of God be diligently maintained within the heart.\* Or there is another light in which we may consider the distinction between the virgins and the servants, namely that those represent the more contemplative, these the more active laborious members of the Church,—a distinction universally recognized in early times, though little considered now. It is true that every member of the Church ought to partake of both, of contemplation and action, so that even under this view both the parables will retain their application to all; but one element may predominate in one member, the other

\* Or they may be co-ordinated with one another. Thus Gerhard (*Harm. Evang.* 164): *Lampas fulgens est talentum usui datum; lampas extincta, talentum otiosum et in terram absconditum.*

in another: the endeavour of each must be harmoniously to regulate and proportion them in his own case, according to the gifts which he finds within himself, and the needs which he beholds in others around him.

We meet with another recension, so to speak, of this parable at Mark xiii. 34, with not unimportant variations, with traces at the same place of the Ten Virgins ("Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping," ver. 36); the whole, however, which St. Matthew records more distinctly, being by St. Mark blended together, and more briefly recorded. We cannot doubt, however, that both Evangelists are relating the same discourse, introducing it as they both do immediately after the warning concerning the calamities of the last days. St. Luke (xix. 11) has also preserved for us a parable with many points of similarity to this, yet certainly not identical with it. I shall consider St. Luke's parable by itself, and in its own place, as I cannot doubt that those are in error who would identify the two.\* Every thing is against this. The time and place are different; the parable which St. Luke records, having been spoken when Jesus was now drawing near to Jerusalem, but had not yet made his triumphal entry,—this, while He was seated on the Mount of Olives, the third day after his entry into the city. That was addressed to the multitude as well as to his disciples; this to the innermost circle of his own most trusted followers, of those to whom He was about to confide the carrying forward of the great work which *He* had Himself commenced on earth. The scope of that, which is the more complex parable, is twofold, and may be thus defined. The multitude, and perhaps many that were following the Lord with true hearts, thought that He was now going to take his kingdom and to reign, to seat Himself on the throne of his father David at Jerusalem (Acts i. 6). He would teach them that there must yet be a long interval before any open assumption of his kingdom could find place; that He

\* Maldonatus and others. Their arguments are well disposed of by Gerhard (*Harm. Evang.* 154, ad init.).

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must go away, and only after a long period return; and that not till that period had elapsed, should the powers that opposed his kingdom be effectually put down. In the mean time (and here is the point of contact between the two parables), those who stood to Him in the relation of servants and friends were not to be idly waiting the time of his coming back, but should seek earnestly to forward his interests, each according to the ability given him, being sure that at his return He would reward every man's work; at which time of his return, as St. Luke, in accordance to the plan of his parable, relates, He would also utterly destroy his enemies,—even all who had proclaimed that they would not have this man to reign over them. The scope of *his* parable then is twofold. It is addressed, in part, to that giddy light-minded multitude who were following Jesus with an expectation that He would suffer Himself to be made a king in their sense of the word; and who, when they discovered that He had no such purposes as these, might, perhaps, many of them turn against Him, and join in the cry, “Crucify him.” He warns them that his triumph over his enemies, though not speedy, yet should be as certain as it would be terrible: there is for them a double warning, that they be not offended or prevented from attaching themselves yet closer to Him and to his Church by the things which should befall Him at Jerusalem; that, least of all, they suffer themselves to be drawn into the ranks of his foes, since these were doomed to an utter destruction. For the disciples also that parable has a warning, namely, that this long period between his going away and coming again in glory and power, must not be a period of sluggish inactivity, but one in which they would be required to show all good fidelity to their absent Lord: which fidelity would by Him be acknowledged and abundantly rewarded, even as sloth and a neglect of his interests would meet also their due recompense of reward.

A recent assailant\* of the historical accuracy of the record

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\* STRAUSS, *Leben Jesu*, vol. i. p. 675.

which in the four Gospels we have of our Lord's discourses has fancied that he detects in that parable, of St. Luke, just as in St. Matthew's record of the Marriage of the King's Son (Matt. xxii. 1), a blending together, through loose and floating tradition, of heterogeneous materials,—that in fact we have there what ought to have been two parables, joined in one; and this so awkwardly, that the joinings are plainly discernible—this confusion having arisen out of the circumstance that they both turn upon the common fact of a lord absenting himself from his home for a season. He observes that servants and citizens stand in no relation to one another, that with the very slightest alterations, ver. 12, 14, 15, 27, would form a complete whole, and, standing by themselves, might be entitled the parable of the Rebellious Citizens; while the remaining verses would constitute the parable of the Pounds, which would then be free from all admixture of foreign elements.\* But only let that be kept in mind, which this objector has failed to perceive, namely, that there were two groups of hearers in different states of mind and needing different admonitions, to whom the Lord addressed the parable in St. Luke, and it will at once be perceived how He divided to all, to his own disciples and to the multitude, according to their several needs. In St. Luke the parable is of necessity more complex, as having a more complex purpose to fulfil. In St. Matthew it is simpler; for it is addressed to the disciples, or rather to the Apostles alone, and the parts intended for the multitude would be superfluous here, and accordingly are not introduced.

To the Apostles then, and to none other, the parable of the Talents, which alone concerns us now, was spoken. It is

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\* This view has no novelty: indeed his whole book is little more than a mustering up and setting in array objections which had been made, and most of them answered, long ago. Unger, on the same ground of the lack of unity in this parable, says (*De Par. Jes. Nat.* p. 130): *Itaque simplicem apud Matthæum parabolam, et omnium Christi parabolarum simplicitatem atque unitatem recordanti mihi Lucas visus est cum illâ simplici parabolâ hic alteram similem, sed alias et aliter prolatam, in unam composuisse.*

needful for the right understanding of its outward circumstances that we keep in mind the relation of masters and slaves in antiquity: for that between masters and *servants*, as it now exists among us, affords no satisfactory explanation. The master of a household going away does not leave with his servants,—it would be foreign to all the relations between them,—moneys wherewith to trade in his absence; nor if he did, could he punish them on his return for neglect of duty, as the slothful servant is punished here. But slaves in antiquity were often artisans, or were allowed otherwise to engage freely in business, paying, as it was frequently arranged, a fixed yearly sum to their master: or they had money committed to them wherewith to trade on his account, or with which to enlarge their business, and to bring in to him a share of their profits.\* In the present instance something of this latter sort is assumed: “*The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods.*” It was “*a far country*” into which the Lord Jesus Christ was about to travel;† and that his servants might be furnished in his absence, He was about to intrust them, and all their successors whose representatives they were, with many excellent gifts. The day of Pentecost was no doubt the time when the “*goods*,” that is, spiritual powers and capacities, were by Him most manifestly and most abundantly communicated to his servants, that they might profit withal (Ephes. iv. 8-12). Yet was not that the first occasion when they were so given; the Lord had communicated to them much during his earthly sojourn with them (John xv. 3), and before his ascension (John xx. 22), and from that day forth He has been evermore delivering his goods to each successive generation of his servants. This being so, the parable has application to all times;—yet not primarily to all persons.

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\* See Mr. GRESWELL'S *Exp. of the Par.* vol. v. part 2, p. 27, seq., and the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. *Servus*, pp. 867, 873.

† *Aust. Oper. Imperf. Hom.* 53: Ad Patrem iturus, peregre se iturum dicit, propter caritatem sanctorum, quos relinquebat in terris, cum magis peregre esset in mundo.

It was first addressed to the Apostles alone, and the gifts for the exercise of the ministry, the powers which Christ has given to his Church, are signified in the first place by the committed talents. Seeing, however, that all are called in their measure to edify one another, that all Christians have a spiritual vocation, and are intrusted with gifts, more or fewer, for which they will have to render an account, the parable is applicable to all. While, too, it has relation first to spiritual gifts and capacities, yet it has not therefore no relation to those other gifts and endowments, as wealth, reputation, abilities, learning, which, though not in themselves spiritual, are yet given to men that they may be turned to spiritual ends,—are capable of being sanctified to the Lord, and consecrated to his service, and for the use or abuse of which the possessors will have also to render an account. There is, indeed, a witness for this in our English word "*talent*," which has come to signify any mental endowments, faculties, or powers whatever, a use which is of course entirely the growth of this parable, even as it is a proof of the manner in which it has wrought itself into the thoughts and language of men. True is it that we have now come to use the word oftentimes with an entire forgetfulness of the solemn truth to which it bears witness—namely, that all these endowments are committed trusts, for which account will have one day to be given; yet not the less is such witness implicitly contained in it.

But different men receive these gifts in very different proportions: "*Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability.*"\* It is not that the gifts, as Theophylact explains it, were to each "according to the measure of his faith and purity," for the faith which purifies is itself one of the chiefest of these gifts; but to each "*according to his several ability*," inasmuch as the natural is the ground upon which the spiritual is superinduced, and grace does not dissolve the groundwork

\* Cajetan: *Disponit siquidem Deus in Ecclesiâ suaviter omnia: neminem onerat supra vires, nulli negat donum congruum suis viribus.*

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of the individual character, nor abolish all its peculiarities, nor bring all that are subject to it to a common standard (see 1 Cor. xii. 4-31; Ephes. iv. 16). The natural gifts are as the vessel, which may be large or may be small, and which receives according to its capacity;\* but which in each case is, or may be, *filled*; so that we are not to think of him who had received the two talents as incompletely furnished in comparison with him that had received the five, any more than we should affirm a small circle incomplete as compared with a large. Unfitted he might be for so wide a sphere of labour, but altogether as perfectly equipped for that to which he was destined; for "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit:" and as the body is not all eye, nor are all in an army generals or captains,† so neither in the Church are all furnished to be leaders and governors. Yet while we speak of natural capacity being as the vessel for receiving the wine of the Spirit, we must not leave out of account, that comparative unfaithfulness, stopping short indeed of that which would cause the gift to be quite taken away, will yet narrow the vessel; even as fidelity has the tendency to dilate it; so that one with far inferior natural gifts will often bring in a far more abundant harvest than another with superior powers, who yet does bring in something. Certain broad cases are mentioned in the parable; but they do not exclude other combinations of the talents committed and the talents gained. There may be cases where he of the two, or even of the one, as that of James Davies, the Welsh schoolmaster, will have gained five; there will be many where he of the five will have added to them but two.

Having thus committed the talents to his servants, and divided wisely unto each according to his several powers, the lord "*straightway took his journey.*" In the things earthly

\* Jerome: Christus doctrinam Evangelicam tradidit, non pro largitate et paritate alteri plus, et alteri minus tribuens, sed pro accipientium viribus; quomodo et apostolus eos qui solidum cibum capere non poterant, lacte potasse se dicit.

† See CLEMENS ROM. *Ad Corinth.* 37, where this comparison is used.

the householder's distribution of the gifts naturally and of necessity *precedes* his departure; in the heavenly it is not altogether so; the Ascension, or departure, goes before Pentecost, or great day of the distribution of gifts; yet the "*straightway*" still remains in full force; the interval between them was the smallest, one following hard upon the other, however the order was reversed.

The three verses which follow (17-19) cover the whole period intervening between the first and second coming of Christ. Two of the servants, those to whom the largest moneys have been committed, lay out those sums with diligence and success. These are the representatives of all that are industrious and faithful in their office and ministry, whatsoever that may be. There is this variation between the present parable and St. Luke's, that here the faithful servants multiply their unequal sums in the same proportions: "*He that had received the five talents made them other five talents,*" and again, "*he that had received the two, he also gained other two;*" while there they multiply their equal sums in different proportions; all had alike received a pound, but one gained with that pound ten pounds, and another five. Two most important truths are thus brought out, as it could not have conveniently been done in a single narration; first by St. Matthew this truth, that according as we have received will it be expected from us; and secondly by St. Luke this, that as men differ in fidelity, in zeal, in labour, so will they differ in the amount of their spiritual gains. But while two of the servants were thus faithful in the things committed to them, it was otherwise with the third: "*He that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.*" How apt an image this, for the failing to use divinely imparted gifts, since "wisdom that is hid, and treasure that is hoarded up, what profit is in them both? Better is he that hideth his folly than a man that hideth his wisdom"\* (Ecclus. xx. 30, 31).

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\* Compare Shakspeare (*Measure for Measure*, Act i. Sc. 1):

"Heaven does with us as we with torches do;

Not light them for themselves: for if our virtues



In St. Luke he hides his pound "*in a napkin*;" but that would have been impossible with so large a sum as a talent, which is therefore more fitly said to have been concealed "*in the earth*."\*

"*After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.*" In this "*after a long time*" is another hint (see ver. 5) that his return should not be so speedy as some looked for. But when he comes, it shall be to take account of every man's work. In the joyful coming forward of the faithful servants, we see an example of "boldness in the day of judgment:" they had something to show, as Paul so earnestly desired that he might have, when he said to his beloved Thessalonian converts, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thess. ii. 19; 2 Cor. i. 14; Phil. iv. 1). The faithful servant says here, "*Behold, I have gained*;" in St. Luke, "*Thy pound hath gained*;" thus between them they make up the speech of St. Paul, "I—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." And even this, "*I have gained*," is introduced by that other word, "*thou deliveredst unto me*;"—it is God's gift which has so multiplied in his hands. In this parable, as has been observed, the gain is according to the talents, five for five, and two for two. Consistently with this, the commendation of the servants is expressed in exactly the same language, even as the reward to each is precisely the same: to each it is said, "*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*,"† that is, become a sharer of my joy.

\* Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike  
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touched  
But for fine issues; nor Nature never lends  
The smallest scruple of her excellence,  
But like a thrifty goddess she determines  
Herself the glory of a creditor,  
Both thanks and use."

\* Jerome (*Ad Damas.*) finds a further distinction between hiding in the earth and in a napkin: Hoc talentum non est in sudario colligandum, id est, delicate otioseque tractandum, nec in terrâ defodiendum, terrenis scilicet cogitationibus obscurandum.

† Leighton: "It is but little we can receive here, some drops of

No doubt the image underlying this language is, that the master celebrates his return by a great festival, to which each of the servants, as soon as he has rendered his accounts, and shown that he has been true to his master's interests in his absence, is bidden freely to enter. It is well known that under certain circumstances the master's inviting his slave to sit down with him at table did itself constitute the act of manumission; henceforth he was free.\* Perhaps there may be here allusion to something of the kind—the incorporation in an act of what once He had spoken in words, "Henceforth I call you not servants, . . . but I have called you friends" (John xv. 15; Luke xii. 37; Rev. iii. 20).

There remains one who has not yet given in his account; and it has been often observed how solemn a warning, and to how many, lies in the fact, that he of the *one* talent is the defaulter; since to such an one an excuse like the following might easily occur: "So little is committed to my charge, that it matters not how I administer that little; at the best I cannot do much for God's glory; what signifies the little, whether it be done or left undone?" But the Lord will teach us here that He expects fidelity in little as in much.† We can well understand why he should have lingered to the last, his heart secretly misgiving him, whatever face he may attempt

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joy that enter into *us*; but there *we* shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness." Gerhard has the same thought: Tam magnum enim erit illud gaudium, ut non possit in homine concludi vel ab eo comprehendi, ideo homo intrat in illud incomprehensibile gaudium, non autem intrat illud in hominem velut ab homine comprehensum; and H. de Sto. Victore (*Erud. Theol.* 3) says on this joy of the Lord: Triplex est gaudium: est gaudium seculi, est gaudium tuum, est gaudium Domini tui. Primum est de terrenâ affluentia: secundum de bonâ conscientia: tertium de æternitatis experientia. Non igitur exeat in gaudium seculi, non remaneas in gaudio tuo, sed intres gaudium Domini tui. . . . Ad primum exivit homo, cum cecidit de Paradiso: ad secundum venire incipit, cum per fidem reconciliatus Deo: tunc autem ad tertium perveniet, cum videndo ipsum sicuti est in æternum fruatur ipso.

\* See the *Diet of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. Manumissio, p. 596.

† Grotius: In eo cui minimum erat concreditum negligentia exemplum posuit Christus, ne quis speraret excusatum se iri ab omni labore, Deo quod non eximia dona accepisset.

to put on the matter. It is true that he had not wasted his master's goods like the Unjust Steward, nor spent all his portion in riotous living like the Prodigal, nor was he ten thousand talents in debt like the Unmerciful Servant; and it is an entire mistake to mix up his case with theirs, from which it should be kept wholly distinct. The consequence of such confounding his guilt with theirs would be, that the very persons whose consciences the parable was meant to reach would evade its force. When we weave the meshes of the spiritual net so large, all but the most flagrant offenders are able to slip through: and the parable is not for such, it is not for those denying evidently by their lives and actions that they count Christ to be their Lord and Master at all; it is not for them who thus squander their talent, or refuse to acknowledge that they have ever received one; the law, and their own hearts, tell *them* plainly enough of their sin and danger. But the warning here is for all who *hide* their talent, who, being equipped for a sphere of activity in the kingdom of God, do yet choose, to use Lord Bacon's words, "a goodness solitary and particular, rather than generative and seminal." There is great danger that such might deceive themselves, as there are so many temptations to a shrinking from the labour and the toil involved in this talent's diligent laying out. There is a show of humility in the excuses which would palliate this sloth; as for instance, "The care of my own soul is sufficient to occupy me wholly; the responsibilities of any spiritual work are so great, so awful, that I dare not undertake them; while I am employed about the souls of others, I may perhaps be losing my own." We read repeatedly of those in the early Church, who with pleas like these put back from themselves the charges to which they were called; and who, when they should have been the salt to salt the earth, thought rather to keep their own saltness by withdrawing, sometimes into caves and wildernesses, from all those active ministries in which they might have served their brethren in love.\*

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\* Augustine, in a sermon preached on the anniversary of his exalta-

In the conduct and doom of this slothful servant is contained then a warning to all such as might be tempted to follow after this "goodness solitary and particular," instead of serving their generation according to the will of God. The root out of which this mischief grows is laid bare in the words which he utters, "*Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man.*" It has its rise, as almost every thing else that is evil, in a false view of the character of God. For we must not understand this speech as an excuse framed merely for the occasion, but as the true outspeaking of the inmost heart, the exact expression of the aspect in which this servant did really regard his lord. The churl accounted him churlish, thought him even such an onc as himself. He did not believe in his lord's forgiving love, and in his gracious acceptance of the work with all its faults which was done for him out of a true heart, and with a sincere desire to please him. This was his wilful and guilty ignorance concerning the true character of the master whom he was called to serve. But to know God's name is to trust in Him. They, indeed, who undertake in a right spirit a ministry in his Church, or any work for Him,

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tion to the episcopal dignity (*Serm. cccxxxix. 3*), makes striking use of this parable, while he is speaking of the temptation, whereof he was conscious, to withdraw from the active labour in the Church, and to cultivate a solitary piety: *Si non erogem, et pecuniam servem, terret me Evangelium. Possem enim dicere: Quid mihi est tædio esse hominibus, dicere iniquis, Inique agere nolite, sic agite, sic agere desistite? Quid mihi est oneri esse hominibus? Accepi quomodo vivam, quomodo jussus sum, quomodo præceptus sum, assignem quomodo accepi, de aliis me reddere rationem quo mihi? Evangelium me terret. Nam ad istam securitatem otiosissimam nemo me vinceret: nihil est melius, nihil dulcius, quam divinum scrutari, nullo strepente, thesaurum; dulce est, bonum est. Prædicare, arguere, corripere, ædificare, pro unoquoque satagere, magnum onus, magnum pondus, magnus labor. 'Quis non refugiat istum laborem? Sed terret Evangelium. And again (*In Ev. Joh. Tract 10*): Si autem fueris frigidus, marcidus, ad te solum spectans, et quasi tibi sufficiens, et dicens in corde tuo: Quid mihi est curare aliena peccata, sufficit mihi anima mea, ipsam integram servem Deo: Eja non tibi venit in mentem servus ille qui abscondit talentum et noluit erogare? nunquid enim accusatus est, quia perdidit, et non quia sine lucro servavit? Compare what he beautifully says, *Enar. in Ps. xcix. 2*; and also *De Fide et Oper. 17*.*

are well aware that they shall commit manifold mistakes in that ministry, which they might avoid, if they declined that ministry altogether; even many sins in handling divine things, which they might escape, if they wholly refused that charge.\* But shall those who are competently furnished and evidently called be therefore justified or excused in doing so? would they not, so acting, share in the condemnation of this servant? would they not testify thereby that they thought of God as he thought of his master, that He was a hard† Lord,—extreme to mark what was amiss,—making no allowances,—never accepting the will for the deed, but watching to take advantage of the least failure or mistake on the part of his servants?

Nor does the slothful servant of the parable stop here. If only he may roll off a charge from himself, he does not hesitate to affix one to his lord. In his speech, half cowering and half defying, and thus a wonderful picture of the sinner's bearing towards God, he shrinks not from attributing to him the character of a harsh unreasonable despot, who requires the bricks, but refuses the straw (Exod. v. 7), who would reap what he has not sown, and gather whence he has not strawed.‡ In these

\* This sense of the careful and accurate handling which all divine things require, and the exceeding gravity of a fault therein, though very liable of being pleaded as here by the slothful and the false-hearted, and ever needing, even when most true, to be balanced by other thoughts concerning God, is yet in itself a high grace, and has a word of its own to express it, εὐλάβεια, from εὖ λαμβάνειν,—those divine things being contemplated as costly yet delicate vessels, which must needs be handled with extreme wariness and even fear.

† The epithet σκληρός, which he dares to apply to his lord, is stronger than the αὐστηρός of Luke xix. 21. I have attempted to draw at some length the distinction between these two words in my *Synonyms of the New Testament*, pp. 53-56.

‡ "Strawed" does not refer to the strewing of the seed, for then he would but be saying the same thing twice. Rather there is a step in the process of the harvest. "Where thou hast not ~~strawed~~," or better, ~~scattered~~ with the fan on the barn-floor, there expectest thou to "gather" with the rake: as one who will not be at the trouble to purge away the chaff, yet expects to gather in the golden grains into his store (Matt. iii. 12). Δυσκόπῃσας, the word here used, could scarcely be applied to the measured and orderly scattering of the sower's seed. It is rather

words he gives evidence that he as entirely has mistaken the nature of the work to which he was called, as the character of the master for whom that work should have been done.\* In the darkness of his heart he regards the work as something outward, to be done *for* God, instead of being a work to be wrought *in* Him, or rather, which He would work in and through his servants. He thought that God called to a labour, and gave no ability for the labour, that He imposed a task, which was a mere task, and put no joy nor consolation into the hearts of them that fulfilled it; no wonder then that he should shrink from it. Thus he goes on to say, "*I was afraid*;"† he justifies the caution and timidity which he had shown, declares why it was that he would attempt nothing, and venture upon nothing: he feared to trade on that talent, lest in the necessary risks of business, seeking to gain other he might lose that one, and so enrage his master against himself; even as men might profess to fear to lay themselves out for the winning of other souls, lest, so doing, they might endanger their own.—"*Lo, there thou hast that is thine*."‡ Here it might be asked, how could God's gifts be hidden, and yet restored to Him entire; since the suffering them to lie idle is in fact one form of wasting them? In reality, they could not be so restored. It is only that men imagine they can

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the dispersing, making to fly in every direction, as a pursuer the routed enemy (Luke i. 51; Acts v. 37); or as the wolf the sheep (Matt. xxvi. 31); or as the Prodigal his goods (Luke xv. 13; xvi. 1); or as here, the husbandman the chaff. Thus rightly Schott on this *δισκορίπτας*: "Notionem ventilandi frumentum in areâ repositum exprimit."

\* Aquinas asserts well the true doctrine, which this servant denies: Deus nihil requirit ab homine, nisi bonum quod ipse in nobis seminavit; and Augustine, putting the same truth in the form of a prayer: Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis.

† Hilary (*Comm. in Matt.* in loc.) in the words, "*I was afraid*," hears the voice of them that determine to abide, as the Jew, in the law and in the spirit of bondage, shrinking from the liberty and activity of Christian service. Timui tē, tanquam per reverentiam et metum veterum præceptorum usu Evangelicæ libertatis absteineat.

‡ Cocceius: Jactatio superba conservati talenti significat fiduciam et securitatem ejus qui sibi facile satisfacit. See SWICKER'S *Thes.* s. v. *τάλαντον*.

be thus given back, when they suppose that keeping the negative precepts is all that God requires of them, and that doing this they will restore to Him his gifts entire, as they received them.\*

His lord takes no trouble to dispute or deny the character which this servant has drawn of him, but answers him on his own grounds, making his own mouth to condemn him (Job xv. 6; 2 Sam. i. 16). "*Thou wicked and slothful servant;*"—"wicked," in that he defended himself by calumniating his lord, and "*slothful,*" as his whole conduct has shown; "*thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I had not strawed;*"—that is, "Be it so, grant me to be such as thou describest, severe and exacting; yet even then thou art not cleared; thou oughtest to have done me justice still; and there was a safe way, by which thou mightest have done this, with little or no peril to thyself; and thereby have obtained for me, if not the large gains which were possible through some bolder course, yet some small and certain return for my moneys: *Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received*

\* There is an instructive Eastern tale, which in its deeper meaning runs remarkably parallel to this parable. It is as follows:

There went a man from home: and to his neighbours twain

He gave, to keep for him, two sacks of golden grain.

Deep in his cellar one the precious charge concealed;

And forth the other went and strewed it in his field.

The man returns at last—asks of the first his sack:

"Here take it; 'tis the same; thou hast it safely back."

Unharm'd it shows without; but when he would explore

His sack's recesses, corn there finds he now no more:

One half of all therein proves rotten and decayed,

Upon the other half have worm and mildew preyed.

The putrid heap to him in ire he doth return;

Then of the other asks, "Where is my sack of corn?"

Who answered, "Come with me, and see how it has sped"—

And took, and showed him fields with waving harvests spread

Then cheerfully the man laughed out and said, "This one

Had insight, to make up for the other that had none:

The letter he observed, but *thou* the precept's sense;

And thus to thee and me shall profit grow from hence;

In harvest thou shalt fill two sacks of corn for me,

The residue of right remains in full for thee."

mine own with usury.”\* This putting of the money to the exchangers, Olshausen ingeniously explains: “Those timid natures which are not suited to independent labour in the kingdom of God, are here counselled at least to attach themselves to other stronger characters, under whose leading they may lay out their gifts for the service of the Church.”† This explanation has the advantage that it makes these words not merely useful to add vivacity to the narrative, as the natural exclamation of an offended master; but gives them likewise a spiritual significance, which is not generally sought in them, but which, if they yield it easily and naturally, must by no

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\* *Σὺν τόκῳ*, with increase. So *fenus* is explained by Varro, a *fetu* et quasi a *fetura* quādam pecuniæ parientis atque crescentis. Plato, following up the image, calls the original sum *πατήρ*, and the interest τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκγόνουσ (*Ilp.* ii. 196). To estimate how great the master's gains even in this way might have been, how soon and how largely the original sum might be made “avidos sudare deunces,” we must keep in mind the high rates of interest paid in antiquity. See the *Diet. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. Interest of Money, p. 523; and see also the lively chapter in BECKER'S *Charikles*, vol. i. p. 237, for a graphic description of the *τραπεζίται*, the bankers of antiquity.

† Cajetan has nearly the same explanation: *Intendit per hoc, quod si non ausus fuit uti donq̄ Dei in actionibus multi periculi, uti tamen debuit illo, in actionibus in quibus est lucrum cum paivo periculo.* We may here ask, Has the saying so often quoted in the early Church as our Lord's, yet nowhere to be found in the N. T., *Γίνεσθε δόκιμοι* (or *καλοί*, or *φρόνιμοι*) *τραπεζίται*, its origin here? Many have thought so (see Suicer, s. v. *τραπεζίτης*). but it is difficult to see why, except that the word *τραπεζίται* here occurs. The point of that exhortation is evidently this. Be as experienced money changers, who readily distinguish good coin from bad, receiving that, but rejecting this. Now in this parable there is no direct or indirect comparison of the disciples with moneychangers, and such an exhortation lies wholly aloof from its aim and scope. The words can as little be said to be implicitly contained in the parable, as they can to be plainly read in the text. The precept would be much more easily deduced from 1 Thess. v. 21, 22; even as we find *Γίνεσθε δόκιμοι τραπεζίται* sometimes called not a *dominical* but an *apostolic* saying, or attributed to St. Paul by name, and by some, indeed, even inserted before this very passage. The whole question is thoroughly discussed by Hänsel (*Theol. Stud. und Krit.* 1836, p. 179, sqq.). He maintains this latter origin of the words. See also CORELLERII *Patt. Apostol.* vol. i. p. 249, and the *Annot. in Euseb.* Oxford, 1842, vol. i. p. 930.—There being mention of interest here, *τραπεζίτης* is the fitter word than *κολλυβιστής*, which, however, rightly finds place Matt. xxi. 12, Mark xi. 16. Jerome (*Comm. in Matt.* xxi. 12, 13) has a singular, but erroneous, derivation of the last word.



means be rejected. Certainly this meaning is better than that which Jerome proposes, that the "*exchangers*" are believers in general, to whom the intrusted word of grace should have been committed; that they, trying it, and rejecting any erroneous doctrine which might be admingled with it, but holding fast what was good, might be enriched with the knowledge of God. Such can hardly be the meaning, for that is the very thing which the servant ought to have done in the first instance, boldly to have laid out his gift for the spiritual profit of his brethren; while this of committing the talent to the moneychangers is only the alternative proposed to him, in case he had shrunk from that other and more excellent way.

His doom, who neither in one way nor the other had sought his master's interests, is now pronounced. It is made up of two elements; the first, the forfeiture of the neglected talent; the second, the casting of its unworthy possessor into the darkness without. And first, for the forfeiture: "*Take, therefore, the talent from him.*"\* We have here an important limitation of Rom. xi. 29. This deprivation may be considered partly as directly penal; but partly also as the *natural* consequence of his sloth. For there is this analogy between the course of things in the natural and in the spiritual world, that as a limb which is never called into exercise loses its strength by degrees, its muscles and sinews disappearing, —even so the gifts of God, unexercised, fade and fail from us: "*From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*"† And, on the other hand, as the limb is not

\* Augustine asks here (*Enarr. in Ps. xxxviii. 4*): Quid expectare debent, qui cum luxuriâ consumserunt, si damnantur qui cum pigritiâ servaverunt? And again, Intelligatur poena interversoris ex poenâ pigri.

† Chrysostom (*De Christ. Prec., Con. Anom. 10*) has two other comparisons, to set forth that the grace unused will quickly depart: "For as the corn, if it be let lie for ever in the barn, is consumed, being devoured of the worm, but if it is brought forth and cast in the field, is multiplied and renewed again; so also the spiritual word, if it be evermore shut up within the soul, being consumed and eaten into by envy and sloth and decay, is quickly extinguished, but if, as on a

wasted by strenuous exertion, but rather by it nerved and strengthened, so is it with the gifts of God; they are multiplied by being laid out; a truth we recognize in our proverb, "Drawn wells are seldom dry;" and thus, "*Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance*;" for "the earth, which bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing," that is, a farther blessing, the gift of a continued fruitfulness, "from God" (Heb. vi. 7). Nor is it merely that the one receives more than, and the other loses what, before he had; but *that very gift* which the one loses the other receives; one is enriched with a talent withdrawn *from* the other; one takes the crown, which another has let go (Rev. iii. 11). We see this continually; one by the ordinance of God steps into the place and the opportunities which another neglected or misused, and so has lost (1 Sam. xv. 28; Acts i. 25, 26). And indeed this taking away of the unused talent, which will find its consummation at the day of judgment, yet is also in this present time continually going forward. And herein is mercy, that it is not done all at once, but by little and little, so that till all is withdrawn, it is still possible to recover all: at each successive step in the withdrawal, there is some warning to hold fast what still is left,

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fertile field, it is scattered on the souls of the brethren, the treasure is multiplied to them that receive it, and to him that possessed it;—and as a fountain from which water is continually drawn forth, is thereby rather purified, and bubbles up the more, but being stanchèd fails altogether; so the spiritual gift and word of doctrine, if it be continually drawn forth, and if who will has liberty to share it, rises up the more, but if restrained by envy and a grudging spirit, diminishes, and at last perishes altogether."—Augustine too (or Cæsarius, as the Benedictine editors affirm, *August. Opp.* vol. v. p. 81, Appendix) has an admirable discourse on the manner in which gifts multiply through being imparted, and diminish through being withholden. It is throughout an application of the story of the widow (2 Kin. iv.) whose two sons Elisha redeemed from bondage, by multiplying the oil which she had in her single vessel so long as she provided other vessels into which to pour it, but which, when she had no more, at once stopped:—*et ait Scriptura stetit oleum, posteaquam ubi poneret, non invenit. Sic, dilectissimi fratres, tandiu caritas augetur, quandiu tribuitur. Et ideo etiam ex industria debemus vasa querere, ubi oleum possumus infundere, quia probavimus quod dum aliis infundimus, plus habemus. Vasa caritatis, homines sunt.*

"to strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." It is indeed true that at each successive stage of this decline the effort required for this is greater, the strength for it less: but to complain of this, is to complain that sin is sin, that it brings any curse with it. And even while this is so, it yet remains always possible, till the last spark is extinguished, to fan that spark again into a flame: even the sense of the increasing darkness and decay may be that which shall arouse the man to a serious sense of his danger, and to the need of an earnest revival of God's work in his soul. But this servant had never awoke to the sense of his danger till it was too late, till all was irrevocably lost. And now it is said, not merely that he shall forfeit his talent, but yet further: "*Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" While there is light and joy and feasting within, to celebrate the master's return, the darkness without shall be his portion.

The comparison of the causes which led to this servant's exclusion, and those which led to the exclusion of the foolish virgins, is full of important instructions for all. Those virgins erred through a vain *over*-confidence, this servant through an *under*-confidence that was equally vain and sinful. They were overbold, he was not bold enough. Thus, as in a chart, the two temptations in respect of our relation to God and his service, the two opposing rocks on which faith is in danger of making shipwreck, are laid down for us, that we may avoid them both. Those virgins thought it too easy a thing to serve the Lord; this servant thought it too hard. They esteemed it but as the going forth to a festival which should presently begin; he as a hard, dreary, insupportable work for a thankless master. In them we have the perils that beset the sanguine, in him the melancholic, complexion. They were representatives of a class needing such warnings as this: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 14); "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12);

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself” (Matt. xvi. 24). He was representative of a class that would need to be reminded: “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear” (Rom. viii. 15); “Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest; . . . . but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, . . . . and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. xii. 18, 22, 24).

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## PARABLE XV.

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### THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY.

MARK iv. 26-29.

THIS is the only parable which is peculiar to St. Mark. Like that of the Leaven, of which it seems to occupy the place, it declares the secret invisible energy of the divine word,—that ~~it~~ it has life in itself, and will unfold itself according to the law of its own being; while, besides what this parable has in common with that, it declares further, that this word of life has that in it which will allow it safely to be left to its own inherent energies.

The main difficulty in the parable is the following: Whom shall we understand by the man casting seed in the ground? Is it the Son of man Himself; or is it those who in subordination to Him declare the Gospel of the kingdom? There are embarrassments attending either explanation. If we say that the Lord points to Himself as the sower of the seed, how then shall we explain ver. 27? It cannot be said of Him that He "*knoweth not how*"\* the seed sown in the hearts of his people springs and grows up; since it is only his continual presence by his Spirit in their hearts which causes it to grow at all. Neither can He fitly be compared to a sower who, having scattered his seed, goes his way and occupies himself in other business, feeling that it lies henceforth beyond the sphere of his power to further the prosperity of the seed, but that it must be left to itself and to its own indwelling powers, and that his

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\* It is a poor way to get out of this difficulty to say with Erasmus, that, "*he knoweth not how*," ought rather to be, "*it knoweth not how*,"—that is, the seed knoweth not how it grows itself; since, as no one could have supposed that it did, who would think of denying it?

part will not begin again till the time of the harvest has come round. This is no fit description of Him, who is not merely "the author and finisher of our faith," but who also conducts it through all its intermediate stages, and without whose blessing and active co-operation it would be totally unable to make any, even the slightest, progress. Shall we then, on the other hand, say that by the sower of the seed is intended here one of the inferior ministers and messengers of the truth, and that the purpose of the parable is to teach such, that after the word of life, of which they are bearers, has found place in any heart, they may be of good confidence, trusting to its own powers to unfold itself, for it has a life of its own,—a life independent of him who may have been the original instrument for the communication of that life, even as a child, after it is born, has a life no longer dependent on that of the parents, from which yet it was originally derived? But then, with this explanation, there is another and not slighter difficulty; for at ver. 29 it is said, "*when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he*" (the same clearly who sowed the seed) "*putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*" Of whom can it be affirmed, save of the Son of man, "the lord of the harvest," that he putteth in the sickle,—that he gathereth his people, when they are ripe for glory,—when they have finished their course,—when the work of faith has been accomplished in their hearts,—into everlasting habitations? So that the perplexity is this,—If we say that the Lord means Himself by the chief personage in the parable, then something is attributed to Him which seems unworthy of Him, functions inferior to those which to Him rightly appertain; while if, on the other hand, we take Him to intend those that, in subordination to Himself, are bearers of his word, then something more, a higher prerogative, as it would seem, is attributed, than can be admitted to belong rightly to any, save only to Him. I cannot see any perfectly satisfactory way of escape from this perplexity. We can hardly, for the purpose of evading the embarrassments which beset the first explanation, say that the circumstances mentioned at ver. 27 are not to be pressed, that they belong,

not to the body itself, but only to the drapery, of the parable; for clearly there,—in the sower absenting himself after he has committed the seed to the ground, and in its growing without him,—the moral of the whole must lie, and to strike out this in the interpretation must leave the whole parable without purpose or point.

Not admitting then this too convenient explanation, I will yet take the parable as having reference in the first place, though not exclusively, to the Lord Himself, the great Sower of the seed; and it will then remain to see how far the acknowledged difficulties are capable of being removed or mitigated. It commences thus: "*So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day.*" By these last words it is agreed among interpreters,—old and new, almost without exception,—that is signified not his carefulness after having sown the seed, but his absence of such an after-carefulness: \* he does not think it necessary to keep watch over his seed, having once intrusted it to the ground, but he sleeps securely by night, and by day he rises and goes about his ordinary business, leaving with full confidence the seed to itself; which meanwhile "*should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.*" These words have no difficulty,—on the contrary, are full of most important instruction,—so long as we apply them, as no doubt we fairly may, to those who under Christ are teachers in his Church. They are here implicitly bidden to have faith in the word which they preach, in that seed which they sow; for it is the seed of God. When it has found place in a heart, they are not to be tormented with anxiety concerning the final issue, but rather to have confidence in its indwelling power

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\* So Pole (*Synops.* in loc.) in a passage woven out of several commentators: *Semente factâ transigit securus noctes et dies, segetem Deo committens, nec dubitans quin germinet, ipse agens alia vitæ munia.* The only interpreter that I know, who takes an opposite view, is Theophylact, who understands the rising night and day to mark the continual watchfulness of Christ over his Church. But what then will the sleeping mean? and, moreover, this explanation goes directly contrary to the whole aim and purpose of the parable.

and might,\* not supposing that it is they who are to keep it alive, and that it can only live through them; for this of maintaining its life is God's part and not theirs, and He undertakes to fulfil it. They are instructed also to rest satisfied that the seed should grow and spring up without their knowing exactly how: let them not be searching at its roots to see how they have stricken into the soil, nor seek prematurely to anticipate the shooting of the blade, or the forming of the corn in the ear;—for the mystery of the life of God in any and in every heart is unfathomable; any attempt to determine that its course shall be this way, or shall be that way, is only mischievous. It has a law, indeed, for its orderly development, "*first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear,*" but that law is hidden; and as manifold as are the works of God in nature, where they never *exactly* repeat themselves, so manifold also are they in grace. Therefore let the messengers of the Gospel be content that the divine word should grow in a mysterious manner, and one whereof the processes are hidden from them; and, believing that it is a divine power and not a human, let them be of good courage concerning the issue, and having sown the seed, commit the rest to God in faith, being confident that He will bring his own work to perfection. Of course this is not meant as though they are not to follow up the work, which has been through their instrumentality commenced. For as, when it is said "*the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself,*" this excludes not the rain, and sun, and all other favourable influences, so neither, when we say that the seed of God implanted in any heart has a life of its own, is it

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\* Calvin brings forward this side of the truth, though an important one, yet too exclusively, when he thus explains the parable: *Sermonem ad verbi ministros dirigit, ne frigidius muneri suo incumbant quia non statim laboris fructus apparet. Ergo illis agricolas ad imitandum proponit, qui sub spe metendi semen in terram projiciunt, neque anxii inquietudine torquentur, sed eunt cubitum et surgunt, hoc est, pro more intenti sunt quotidiano labori, et se nocturnâ quiete reficiunt, donec tandem suo tempore maturescat seges. Ergo quamvis verbi semen ad tempus suffocatum lateat, jubet tamen Christus bono animo esse pios doctores, ne diffidentia illis alacritatem minuat.*



hereby implied that it will not require the nourishment suitable for it,—nay, rather it is affirmed that it will require it; were it a dead thing, it would require nothing of the kind; but because it is living, it has need of that whereon it may feed. With all this it is a different thing to impart life, and to impart the sustenance for life: this latter the Church has still to do for her children, but then it is in faith that they have a life of their own once given and continually maintained from on high, by which they can assimilate to themselves this spiritual food provided for them, and grow thereby.

But it still remains to consider in what sense that which is said of leaving the seed to itself can be attributed to Christ. Olshausen suggests this explanation of the difficulties on this point which have been noted already. It is true, he says, that the inner spiritual life of men is never in any stage of its development without the care and watchfulness of the Lord who first communicated that life: yet are there two moments when He may be said especially to visit the soul; at the beginning of the spiritual life, which is the seed-time, and again when He takes his people to Himself, which is their time of harvest.\* Between these times lies a period in which the work of the Lord is going forward without any such manifest interpositions on his part—not indeed without the daily supply of his Spirit, and the daily ordering of his providence, but as that He does not put to his hand so plainly and immediately as at those two cardinal moments. And the difficulty will be slighter when we make application of the parable,—as

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\* We may compare Job v. 26: "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season." There, however, it is rather said that the favoured of God shall not die till they have known the fulness of earthly blessing, till they have reached Abraham's "good old age," and (if one may use the image not offensively) retire as satisfied guests from life's feast. But in our parable, consistently with the higher dispensation which looks to higher blessings, it is rather affirmed that the faithful are not taken away while yet the work of grace is incomplete in them, while yet Christ is not fully formed in them, that in this respect there is a provident love ordering their death as well as their life, that it is only "*when the fruit is brought forth,*" that Christ "*putteth in the sickle.*"

undoubtedly we are bound to do,—to the growth and progress of the universal Church, and not only to that of the individual soul. The Lord at his first coming in the flesh sowed the word of the kingdom in the world, planted a Church therein; which having done He withdrew Himself; the heavens received Him till the time of the consummation of all things. Many and many a time since then the cry has ascended in his ears, “Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down!”—often it has seemed to man as though the hour of interference had arrived, as though his Church were at its last gasp, at the point to die, as though its enemies were about to prevail against it, and to extinguish it for ever, unless He appeared for its deliverance. But for all this He has not come forth; He has left it to surmount its obstacles, not indeed without his mighty help, yet without his visible interference. He has left the divine seed, the plant which He has planted, to grow on by night and by day, through storm and through sunshine, increasing secretly with the increase of God; and will let it so continue, till it has borne and brought to maturity all its appointed fruit. And only then, when the harvest of the world is ripe, when the number of his elect people is accomplished, will He again the second time appear unto salvation, thrusting in his sickle, reaping the earth, and gathering the wheat into his barns.\*

The convenience of interpreting the parable altogether, and taking in its whole object and aim at a single view, has caused one or two less important circumstances to be passed over, which yet it might be well not to leave quite without notice. When it is said that “*the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself*,” it may excite surprise that it is not rather said: The seed groweth and springeth up of itself; for that, strictly speaking, is the doctrine which the Lord is now teaching: and if the earth be here, as it must be, the heart of man, it is not there, but in the word of God which is sown there, that the

\* Grotius: Sensus mihi videtur esse perspicuus: Christum a factâ semente ad messis tempus agro aspectabiliter non adfuturum.

## THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY.

living power resides. But the Lord's object, in using the expression,\* is pointedly to exclude the agency of the sower, at least a continuous agency on his part of the same kind as he exercises at the first, and this done he is not careful for more.—The three stages of spiritual growth implied in "*the blade*," "*the ear*," and "*the full corn in the ear*," suggest a comparison of this passage with 1 John ii. 12-14, where the Apostle in like manner divides the faithful into "little children," "young men," and "fathers," evidently according to the different degrees of progress which they have made in the spiritual life.—With ver. 29 we may compare Rev. xiv. 14, 15; and the comparison supplies an additional reason why we should not rest satisfied with the application of the parable to any short of the Son of man Himself: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust † in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe:"—and as an instructive parallel to the entire parable we may compare 1 Pet. i. 23-25.

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\* *Αὐτομάτῃ*. The word, from *αὐτός* and the obsolete *μάω*, desidero, is one of singular fitness and beauty. Elsewhere it occurs but once in the N. T. (Acts xii. 10: cf. Josh. vi. 5, lxx.). It is often used by classic authors to describe the spontaneous bringing forth of earth in the golden age, during the paradisiacal state anterior to the change marked Gen. iii. 17. Yet here it is not exactly correct to make, as has been done, the *αὐτομάτῃ γῇ* = *ἀκάμαρος γῆ* of Sophocles, *Antig.* 339; for, leaving out of account that that does not mean the earth which brings forth without labour, but which is never weary of bringing forth, it besides is not the notion of previous labour bestowed on the soil which is here excluded, but of ulterior carefulness. In the next verse, *ἐαυτὸν* must be supplied after *παρὰδῶ*. Virgil will then have exactly the same idiom:

Multa adeo gelidâ melius se nocte dederunt.

† This passage also shows us that *δρέπανον* is not here, as so many say, a part of the whole, and in place of *θεριστάς*. There is no argument for this to be derived from the word *ἀποστέλλει* here, which is not stronger than the *πέμψον* there, where yet it is plain that the Lord is imagined as in his own person the reaper; and compare Joel iii. 18, lxx. *ἐξαποστείλατε δρέπανα*. So in Latin, *immittere falcem*.

## PARABLE XVI.

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### THE TWO DEBTORS.

LUKE vii. 41-43.

WE may affirm with tolerable certainty that the two earlier Evangelists and the last, in their several relations of Christ's anointing, refer to one and the same event (Matt. xxvi. 7; Mark xiv. 8; John xii. 3). But the question whether St. Luke records the same circumstance, and the woman in his narration, "*which was a sinner*," be Mary the sister of Lazarus, which then must follow, is more difficult, and has been variously answered from the earliest times in the Church. The main arguments for the identity of all the relations are, first, the name Simon, as that of the giver of the feast in one place (Luke vii. 40), and most probably so in the other, in which he appears as the master of the house where it was given (Matt. xxvi. 6); secondly, the seeming unlikelihood that twice the Lord should have been honoured in so very unusual a manner; and thirdly, the strange coincidence, as it would otherwise be, that in each case there should have been on the part of some present a misinterpretation of the thing done, and an offence taken.

To these arguments, however, it may be answered, that the name Simon was of much too frequent use among the Jews for any stress to be laid upon the sameness of the name.\*

\* Besides these *two*, as I take them, there are nine Simons mentioned in the N.T.. Simon Peter, Simon Zelotes (Luke vi 15); Simon, one of the Lord's brethren (Matt. xiii. 55); Simon of Cyrene (Matt. xxvii. 32); Simon, father of Judas Iscariot (John vi. 71); Simon Magus (Acts viii. 9); Simon, Peter's host at Joppa (Acts ix. 43); Simeon, for it is the same name, who took the infant Saviour in his arms in the temple (Luke ii. 25); and Simeon called Niger, one of the prophets at Antioch (Acts xiii. 1).

Again, the anointing of the feet with odours or with ointments, though not so common as the anointing of the head, yet was not in itself something without precedent;\* the only remarkable coincidence here being, that Mary the sister of Lazarus, and the woman "*which was a sinner*," should have each wiped the feet of the Lord with the hairs of her head (Luke vii. 38; John xii. 3). Now if this had been any merely fantastic honour paid to the Lord, which to offer would scarcely have occurred to more persons than one, we might well wonder to find it twice, and on two independent occasions, repeated;—but take it as an expression of homage, of reverence and love, such as would naturally rise out of the deepest and truest feelings of the human heart, and then its recurrence is nowise wonderful. And such it is; in the hair is the glory of the woman (see 1 Cor. xi. 15), long beautiful tresses having evermore been held as her chiefest adornment;† they are in the human person highest in place and in honour, —while on the contrary the feet are lowest in both. What then was this service, but the outward expression, and incorporation in an act, of the inward truth, that the highest and chiefest of man's honour and glory and beauty were lower and meaner than the lowest that pertained to the Son of God; that

\* Thus Curtius, of the Indian monarchs (viii. 9): *Dentis soleis odoribus illinuntur pedes*; and Plutarch makes mention, though on a very peculiar occasion, of wine and sweetsmelling essences as used for this purpose (BECKER's *Charikles*, vol i. p. 428). The custom of having the sandals taken off by those in attendance before meals, which would render the service of the woman easy and natural to be done, is frequently alluded to by classic writers. Thus Terence:

*Adecurrunt servi, soccos detrahunt,  
Inde alii festinare, lectos sternere,  
Cœnam apparare.*

And in all the ancient bas-reliefs and pictures illustrative of the subject we see the guests reclining with their feet bare. (See the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. *Cœna*, p. 253.)

† So the Latin poet: *Quod primum formæ decus est, cecidere capilli*. And of nearly similar uses of the hair in extreme humiliation and deprecation of the divine anger we have abundant examples in profane history. Thus Livy, iii. 7: *Stratæ passim matres crinibus templa verrentes veniam irarum cælestium exposcunt*. Cf. Polybius, ix. 6, 3.

they only found their true place, when acknowledging their subjection and doing service to Him? And what wonder that the Lord, who called out all that was deepest and truest in the human heart, who awoke in it, as none else might ever do, feelings of the warmest love and profoundest reverence, should twice have been the object of this honour? Yet was it an honour, we may observe, with some differences in the motives which called it forth. Once, in the case of Mary the sister of Lazarus, the immediately impelling cause was intense gratitude. She had found the words of Christ words of eternal life to herself, and He had crowned his gifts to her by giving back to her a beloved brother, whom she now beheld restored to life and health before her; the pound of ointment "very costly"\* which she brought was a thank-offering from her; and as less of shame was mingled in her feelings, she anointed both her Lord's feet and also his head. But what brought this woman with the alabaster box of ointment to Jesus, was the earnest yearning after the forgiveness of her sins; and she, in her deep shame and abasement of soul before Him, presumed not to approach Him nearer than to anoint his feet only, standing the while behind Him; and kissing them with her lips, and wiping with the hair of her head, she realized, as it were, in an outward act, the bidding of St. Paul, "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom. vi. 19). And to the third argument it may be answered, that though the two events have this in common, that there was on each occasion an offence taken, yet beyond this there is nothing similar. In the one case, it is the Pharisee, the giver of the feast, that is offended; in the other, some of the disciples, and mainly Judas: the Pharisee is offended with the Lord, Judas not so much with Him as with the woman; the Pharisee, because

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\* Gregory the Great, applying the "very costly" to this history, says beautifully (*Hom. 83 in Evang.*): Consideravit quid fecit, et noluit moderari quid faceret. The whole discourse is full of beauty.

the Lord's conduct seems inconsistent with his reputation for holiness, but Judas, as is well known, from a yet meaner and baser motive of covetousness. To all which it may be added, that there is nothing to make it the least probable, that the Mary of the happy family circle in Bethany,\* to whom the Lord bears such honourable testimony (Luke x. 42), had ever been aforesaid one to whom the title of "*sinner*,"† as it is here meant, could belong; and, as it has been ingeniously observed, with the risen Lazarus sitting at the table, even this Pharisee would hardly have so rapidly drawn his conclusion against the divine mission and character of his guest.

These arguments appear so convincing, that one is surprised to find how much fluctuation of opinion there has been

\* *Σεμνή καὶ σπουδαία*, as a Greek Father entitles her.

† "Which *was* a sinner" must then mean "which *had been* a sinner" in former times, but had long since been brought to repentance and chosen the better part, and been received back into the bosom of her family, even as the history must be related here altogether out of its place, for the anointing by Mary took place immediately before the Lord's death, it was for his burial (Matt xxvi. 12). Many do thus understand the words to refer to sins long ago committed, even as they had been long ago forsaken; as Grotius, partly moved thereto by the necessities of his Harmony, which admits but one anointing, and partly by his fear of antinomian tendencies in the other interpretation; for that he was in this respect somewhat afraid of the Gospel of the grace of God, his Commentary on the Romans gives sufficient evidence, even as the same fear makes another expositor affirm, that her sin, for which she was thus spoken of as "*a sinner*," was no more than a too great fondness for adorning her person, just as others will not allow Rahab to have been, at least in the common sense of the term, a πόρνη at all, but only the keeper of a lodging-house. But how much does that view of Grotius weaken the moral effect of the whole scene, besides being opposed to the plain sense of the words; if the woman had long since returned to the paths of piety, even the Pharisee would hardly have been so vehemently offended at the gracious reception which she found, or spoken of her as he does, "for she *is* a sinner." We should rather with Augustine (*Serm.* 99) consider this as the turning moment of her life (*Accessit ad Dominum immunda ut rediret munda, accessit ægra ut rediret sana*). Moreover in that other case, the absolving words, "*Thy sins are forgiven*," instead of being those of a present forgiveness now first passing upon her, can only be the repeated assurance of a forgiveness which she must long since have received; and how unnatural a supposition this is, every one may judge.

from the very first in the Church, concerning the relation of these histories one to another,—the Greek Fathers generally distinguishing them,—the Latin, for the most part, seeing in them but one and the same history. This last opinion, however, finally prevailed, and was long almost the universal one in the Church, that is, from the time of Gregory the Great, who threw all his weight into this scale,\* until the times of the Reformation. Then, when the Scriptures were again subjected to a more critical examination, the other interpretation gradually became prevalent anew, and one might say, had for some while been recognized almost without a dissentient voice, till again in our own days Schleiermacher has maintained, not with success, but certainly with extraordinary acuteness, that the anointing happened but once. But to enter further on this debate would be alien to the present purpose: and the passage containing the parable of the Two Debtors will be considered without any reference to the histories in the other Gospels, of which indeed I have the firmest conviction that it is altogether independent

Our Lord having been invited to the house of a Pharisee, had there “*sat down to meat.*” That a woman, and one of a character such as is here represented, should have pressed into the guest-chamber, and this, uninvited either by the Lord, or

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\* Thus in the *Dies iræ*, composed in the thirteenth century,

Qui Mariam absolvisti, . . .

Miln quoque spem dedisti;

though here may possibly be allusion to Mary Magdalene, who indeed was often, though without the slightest grounds, save that the first notice of her occurs shortly after this incident (Luke viii. 2), identified with this “woman that was a sinner;” so that many have made but one and the same person of Mary the sister of Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and this woman; thus Gregory himself, *Hom. 33 in Evang.* The belief in the identity of the two last has indelibly impressed itself on the very language of Christendom; but there is nothing to make us suppose that Mary Magdalene had led an eminently sinful life, before she was found in the company of the holy women that ministered to the Lord,—unless some should say that by the “seven devils” which went out of her (Luke viii. 2) were intended the seven capital sins.—There is a good sketch of the controversy in DEXLING’S *Obs. Sac.* vol. iii. p. 291.



by the master of the house, and that she should have there been permitted to offer to the Saviour the form of homage which she did, may at first sight appear strange;—yet after all does not require the supposition of something untold for its explanation, as that she was a relation of Simon's, or lived in the same house,—suppositions which are altogether strange, not to say contradictory, to the narrative. A little acquaintance with the manners of the East, where meals are so often almost public, where ranks are not separated with such rigid barriers as with us, will make us understand how easily such an occurrence might have taken place.\* Or if this does not seem altogether to explain it, one has only to consider how soon such obstacles as might have been raised up against her, and would have seemed insuperable to others, or to herself in another state of mind, would have been put aside, or broken through by an earnestness such as now possessed her: even as it is the very nature of such religious earnestness to break through and despise these barriers, nor ever to pause and ask itself whether, according to the world's judgment, it be “in season” or “out of season.”†

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\* The following confirmation of what above is written has been since put into my hands: “At dinner at the Consul's house at Damietta we were much interested in observing a custom of the country. In the room where we were received, besides the divan on which we sat, there were seats all round the walls. Many came in and took their place on those side-seats, uninvited and yet unchallenged. They spoke to those at table on business or the news of the day, and our host spoke freely to them. This made us understand the scene in Simon's house at Bethany, where Jesus sat at supper, and Mary came in and anointed his feet with ointment; and also the scene in the Pharisee's house, where the woman who was a sinner came in uninvited and yet not forbidden, and washed his feet with her tears. We afterwards saw this custom at Jerusalem, and there it was still more fitted to illustrate these incidents. We were sitting round Mr. Nicolayson's table, when first one and then another stranger opened the door, and came in, taking their seat by the wall. They leant forward and spoke to those at the table.” (*Narrative of a Mission to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839.*)

† Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. cxl. 4*): Illa impudica, quondam frontosa ad fornicationem, frontosior ad salutem irrupit in domum alienam; and again (*Serm. xcix. 1*): Vidistis mulherem famosam . . . non

In the thoughts which passed through the heart of the Pharisee,—displeased at seeing that the Lord did not repel the woman, but graciously accepted her homage,—the true spirit of a Pharisee betrays itself, of one who could not raise his thoughts beyond a ceremonial pollution, nor understand of holiness as standing in any thing save the purifying of the flesh,\* who would have said to that woman, had she dared to approach unto him, “Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou!”† In the conclusion to which, in his inward heart, he arrived, “This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is,” we trace the belief, so evidently current among the Jews, that discerning of spirits was one of the sure marks of a true prophet, and in an especial degree of the great prophet of all, the Messiah,—a belief founded on Isai. xi. 3, 4 (see 1 Kin. xiv. 6; 2 Kin. i. 3; v. 26). Thus Nathanael first exclaims in wonder to the Lord, who has truly read his character, “Whence knowest

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invitatam irruisse convivio, ubi suus medicus recumbebat, et quæsisse piâ impudentiâ sanitatem: irruens quasi importuna convivio, opportuna beneficio; and Gregory the Great (*Hom. 33 in Evang.*): Quia turpitudinis suæ maculas aspexit, lavanda ad fontem misericordiæ cucurrit, convivantes non erubuit: nam quia semetipsam graviter erubescibat intus, nihil esse credidit, quod verecundaretur foris; and another (BERNARDI *Opp.* vol. ii p. 601): Gratias tibi, ô beatissima peccatrix; ostendisti mundo tutum satis peccatoribus locum, pedes scilicet Jesu, qui neminem spernunt, neminem rejiciunt, neminem repellunt; suscipiunt omnes, omnes admittunt. Ibi certe Æthiopissa mutat pellem suam; ibi pardus mutat varietatem suam; ubi solus Phariseus non expumat superbiam suam.

\* Augustine: Habebat sanctitatem in corpore non in corde, et quia non habebat eam in corde, utique falsam habebat in corpore. Cf. *Enarr. in Ps. c. 5; cxxv. 2*; and Gregory the Great (*Hom. 34 in Evang.*): Vera justitia compassionem habet, falsa justitia dedignationem.—As a specimen of similar notions of holiness current among the Jews, a commentator on Prov. v. 8 puts this very question: Quanto spatio a meretrice recedendum est? R. Chasda respondet: Ad quatuor cubitos (SCHOETTEREN, *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 348). And again, p. 303, various Rabbis are extolled for the precautions which they took to keep lepers at a distance from them; for example, by flinging stones at them if they approached too near.

† Bernard, in a beautiful passage (*De Dedio. Eco., Serm. 4*), styles him: Phariseum illum murmurantem adversus medicum, qui salutem operabatur, et succensentem languidæ, quæ salvabatur.

thou me?" and then presently breaks out into that undoubting confession of faith, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel;" and so the Samaritan woman, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 29); and on account of this belief it is, that the Evangelists are so often careful to record that Jesus knew the thoughts of his hearers, or as St. John (ii. 25) expressly states it, "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man."\* So that, in fact, the Pharisee mentally put the Lord into this dilemma,—either He does not know the true character of this woman, in which case He lacks that discernment of spirits which pertains to every true prophet; or if He knows it, and yet endures her touch and is willing to accept a service at such hands, He is lacking in that holiness which is also the mark of a prophet of God; such therefore in either case He cannot be. Probably as these thoughts were passing through his mind, he already began to repent of the needless honour he had shown to one, whose pretensions to a peculiar mission from God he had thus quickly concluded were unfounded.

The Lord, however, showed him that He was indeed a discernor of the thoughts of hearts, by reading at once what was passing in *his* heart, and laying his finger without more ado on the tainted spot which was there. "*Simon,*" He said, "*I have somewhat to say unto thee.*" The other could not refuse to hear, nor has he yet so entirely renounced his faith in some higher character as belonging to his guest, but that he still addresses Him with an appellation of respect, "*Master, say on.*" With this introduction,—with this leave to speak asked and received,—the parable is uttered. "*There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay,*

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\* Vitringa (*Obs. Sac.* vol. i. p. 479) has an interesting and instructive essay (*De Signis a Messia edendis*) on the expectations of the Jews concerning the miracles which the Messiah was to perform, and by which He was to legitimate his pretensions.

*he frankly forgave them both.*" In the words themselves there is no difficulty, though in the application of them to the case which they were spoken to illustrate, there are one or two which will claim to be considered. God, it needs not to say, is the creditor, men the debtors, and sins the debts. Of the sums named as the amount of the debts, fifty and five hundred pence, it may be remarked that they vary indeed, but not at all in the same proportion as the two debts vary in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. xviii.). There the difference is between ten thousand talents and one hundred pence,—an enormous difference, even as the difference is enormous between the sins which a man commits against God, and those which his fellow-man may commit against him; but here the difference is not at all so great, the sums vary but in the proportion of ten to one, for there is no such incalculable difference between the sins which one man and another commits against God.

The parable proceeds: "*Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.*" Our difficulties meet us in the application of these words: for while that which Simon says is true in the order of things natural, can the consequences which would seem thereupon to be induced be also true in respect of things spiritual? Are we to conclude from hence, as at first sight might appear, that there is any advantage in having multiplied transgressions? that the wider one has wandered from God, the nearer, if he be brought back at all, he will cleave to Him afterwards? the more sin, the more love? Would it not then follow, "Let us do evil, that good may come,"—let us sin much now, that we may love much hereafter, that we may avoid that lukewarmness of affections which will be the condition of those that have sinned but little? And must we not then conclude, that for a man to have been kept out of gross offences in the time before he was awakened to a deeper religious earnestness,—or, better still, for a man to have grown out of his baptismal root,—this, instead of being a

blessing, and a mercy, and a matter of everlasting thanksgiving, would prove a hindrance, opposing, in his case, an effectual barrier to any very near and very high communion of love with his Saviour? And to understand the passage thus, would it not be to affirm a moral contradiction,—to affirm in fact this, that the more a man has emptied himself of love,—the more he has laid waste all nobler affections and powers,—the deeper his heart has sunk in selfishness and sensuality (for sin is all this), the more capable he will be of the highest and purest love?

But the whole matter is clear, if we consider the debt, not as an *objective*, but a *subjective* debt,—not as so many outward transgressions and outbreaks of evil, but as so much conscience of sin: and this we well know is in nowise in proportion to the amount and extent of evil actually committed and brought under the cognizance of other men. Often they who have least of what the world can call sin, or rather crime (for the world knows nothing of sin), have yet the deepest sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, are most conscious of it as a root of bitterness in themselves, are the most forward to exclaim, “Woe is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips;” and therefore, as they have most groaned under the evil, are the most thankful for the fact of a redemption, for the gift of a Redeemer. But “*he to whom little is forgiven*” is not necessarily he who has sinned little, but he who is lacking in any strong conviction of the exceeding evil of sin, who has little feeling of his own share in the universal taint and corruption that cleaves to all the descendants of Adam, who has never learned to take home his sin to himself; who therefore, while he may have no great objection to God’s plan of salvation, while he may have a cold respect, as this Pharisee had, for Christ, yet esteems that he could have done as well, or nearly as well, without Him. He loves little, or scarcely at all, because he has little sense of a deliverance wrought for him; because he never knew what it was to lie under the curse of a broken law, having the sentence of death in himself, and then by that merciful Saviour to be set free, and bidden to

live, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.\*

Simon himself was an example of one who thus loved little, who having little sense of sin, felt little his need of a Redeemer, and therefore loved that Redeemer but little: and he had betrayed this his lack of love in small yet significant matters. Accounting, probably, the invitation itself as sufficient honour done to his guest, he had withheld from Him the ordinary courtesies almost universal in the East; had neither given Him water for the feet (Gen. xviii. 4; Judg. xix. 21), nor offered Him the kiss of peace (Gen. xxii. 4; Exod. xviii. 7), nor anointed his head with oil, as was ever the custom at festivals (Ps. xlii. 5; cxli. 5; Matt. vi. 17). But while *he* had fallen so short of the customary courtesies, that woman had far exceeded them. He had not poured water on the Saviour's feet, she had washed them, not with water, but with her tears—the blood of her heart,† as Augustine calls them—and then wiped them with the hairs of her head; he had not given the single kiss of salutation on the cheek, she had multiplied kisses, and those upon the feet; he had not anointed the head of Jesus with ordinary oil, but she with precious ointment had anointed even his feet.

*"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."* There is an embarrassment, by all acknowledged, on the face of these words; first, how to bring them into agreement with the parable, for in that the debtor

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\* Augustine (*Serm.* xcix. 4) freely acknowledges the stress of this difficulty: *Dicit enim aliquis, Si cui modicum dimittitur, modicum diligit; cui autem plus dimittitur, plus diligit, expedit plus diligere quam minus diligere: oportet ut multum peccemus . . . ut dimissorem magnorum debitorum amplius diligamus; and again: Si invero plus diligere eum, cui plura peccata dimissa sunt, utilius multa peccavit, utilior erat multa iniquitas, ne esset tepida caritas.* And he solves it as is done above: *O Pharisee, ideo parum diligis, quia parum tibi dimitti suspicaris: non quia parum dimittitur, sed quia parum putas esse, quod dimittitur.* Compare a beautiful sermon by Schleiermacher (*Predigten*, vol. i. p. 524).

† *Fudit lacrymas, sanguinem cordis.*

is said to love much, because forgiven much, and not to be forgiven much, because he loved much; and again, how to bring them into agreement with the general doctrine of Scripture, which ever teaches that we love God, because He first loved us,—that faith is the previous condition of forgiveness, and not love, which is not a condition at all, but a consequence. Some have felt these difficulties so strongly, that in their fear lest the Romanists should draw any advantage for their *fides formata* from the passage,—which indeed they are willing enough to do,—they have affirmed that the word designating the cause really stands for that designating the consequence,—that “*her sins are forgiven, for she loved much,*” means “*her sins are forgiven, therefore she loved much.*”<sup>\*</sup> But, in the first place, it was not true that she yet knew her sins to be forgiven,—the absolving words are only spoken in the next verse; and moreover, this way of escape from a doctrinal embarrassment, by some violence done to the plain words of the text, will at once be rejected by all, who justly believe that in the interpretation of Scripture, grammar, and the laws of human speech, should first be respected, and that the doctrine can and will take care of itself—will never in the end be found in any contradiction with itself,—that the faith of the Church will ever come triumphantly forth out of every part of the word of God. And as far as regards advantage which the Romish controversialists would fain draw from the passage, such, whatever may be the explanation, there can really be none. The parable stands in the heart of the narrative, an insuperable barrier against such; he who owed the large debt is not forgiven it as freely as the other is his smaller debt, because of the greater love which he before felt towards the creditor;† but, on the contrary, the sense of a

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<sup>\*</sup> They say ἔτι is here for διό, and appeal to John viii. 44 and 1 John iii. 14; but neither passage, rightly interpreted, yields the least support to the view that the words could ever be interchangeably used. (See WINER'S *Grammatik*, p. 426)

† Incredible as it will appear, this is actually the interpretation of the parable given by Maldonatus (ad loc.): “*Which of them will love*

larger debt remitted makes him afterwards love his creditor more. And besides, were it meant that her sins were forgiven, because,—in their sense who would make charity justify, and not faith,\*—she loved much, the other clause in the sentence would necessarily be, “*But he who loveth little, to the same little is forgiven.*”

But the words, “*for she loved much,*” may best be explained by considering what the strong sorrow for sin, and the earnest desire after forgiveness, such as this woman displayed, mean, and from whence they arise;—surely from this, from the deep feeling in the sinner’s heart, that by his sins he has separated himself from that God who is Love, while yet he cannot do without his love,—from the feeling that the heart must be again permitted to love Him, must be again assured of his love toward it, else it will utterly wither and die. Sin unforgiven

*him most?*” is only, he affirms, a popular way of saying, “Which of them *did* love him most?”—which of them may you conclude from the effect to have had most affection for him, and therefore to have been dearest to him, he in whose behalf he was willing to remit a large debt, or he in whose behalf he only remitted a small?—He asserts the same to have been the interpretation of the parable given by Euthymius, and also by Augustine; in the case of the last this is certainly untrue

\* Let me quote, were it only with the hope of bringing it before one reader who was hitherto ignorant of it, the following passage on the attempt thus to substitute charity for faith in the justification of the sinner. “To many, to myself formerly, it has appeared a mere dispute about words but it is by no means of so harmless a character, for it tends to give a false direction to our thoughts, by diverting the conscience from the ruined and corrupted state in which we are without Christ. Sin is the disease. What is the remedy?—Charity?—Pshaw! Charity in the large apostolic sense of the term is the health, the state to be obtained by the use of the remedy, not the sovereign balm itself,—faith of grace,—faith in the God-manhood, the cross, the mediation, the perfected righteousness of Jesus, to the utter rejection and abjuration of all righteousness of our own! Faith alone is the restorative. The Romish scheme is preposterous;—it puts the rill before the spring. Faith is the source,—charity, that is, the whole Christian life, is the stream from it. It is quite childish to talk of faith being imperfect without charity; as wisely might you say that a fire, however bright and strong, was imperfect without heat, or that the sun, however cloudless, is imperfect without beams. The true answer would be: It is not faith,—but utter reprobate faithlessness” (COLERIDGE, *Literary Remains*, vol. ii. p. 368).



is felt to be the great barrier to this; and the desire after forgiveness,—if it be not a mere selfish desire after personal safety, in which case it can be nothing before God,—is the desire for the removal of this barrier, that so the heart may be free to love and to know itself beloved again. This desire then is itself love at its negative pole, not as yet made positive, for the word of grace, the absolving word of God, can alone make it so; it is the flower of love desiring to bud and bloom, but not daring and not able to put itself forth in the chilling atmosphere of the anger of God; but which will do so at once, when to the stern winter of God's anger the genial spring of his love succeeds. In this sense that woman "*loved much*;" all her conduct proved the intense yearning of her heart after a reconciliation with a God of love, from whom she had alienated herself by her sins; all her tears and her services witnessed how much she desired to be permitted to love Him and to know herself beloved of Him, and on account of this her love, which, in fact, was faith\* (see ver. 50, "*Thy faith hath saved thee*"), she obtained forgiveness of her sins. This sense of the miserable emptiness of the creature, this acknowledgment that a life apart from God is not life but death, with the conviction that in God there is fulness of grace and blessing, and that He is willing to impart of this fulness to all who bring the empty vessel of the heart to be filled by Him; this, call it faith or initiatory love, is what alone makes man receptive of any divine gift,—this is what that Pharisee, in his legal righteousness, in his self-sufficiency and pride,† had scarcely

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\* Very distinctly Theophylact (in loc): "Οτι ἡγάπησε πολὺ, ἀντὶ τοῦ, πιστὴν ἐνεδείξατο πολλήν" and presently before he calls all which she had been doing for her Saviour *πίστεως σύμβολα καὶ ἀγάπης*. For further testimonies in favour of this exposition, see GERHARD'S *Loc. Theoll.* loc. xvi. 8, 1.

† In the *Bustan* of the famous Persian poet Saadi (see THOLUCK'S *Blüthensamm. aus d. Morgenl. Mystik*, p. 251) there is a story which seems an echo of this evangelical history. Jesus, while on earth, was once entertained in the cell of a dervisch or monk of eminent reputation for sanctity, in the same city dwelt a youth sunk in every sin, "whose heart was so black that Satan himself shrunk back from it in horror." This last presently appeared before the cell of the monk,

at all, and therefore he derived little or no good from communion with Christ. But that woman had it in large measure, and therefore she bore away the largest and best blessing which the Son of God had to bestow, even the forgiveness of her sins; to her those blessed words were spoken, "*Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace;*" and in her it was proved true that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

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and, as smitten by the very presence of the Divine prophet, began to lament deeply the sin and misery of his life past, and shedding abundant tears, to implore pardon and grace. The monk indignantly interrupted him, demanding how he dared to appear in his presence and in that of God's holy prophet, assured him that for him it was in vain to seek forgiveness, and in proof how inexorably he considered his lot was fixed for hell, exclaimed, "My God, grant me but one thing, that I may stand far from this man on the judgment-day." On this Jesus spoke: "It shall be even so, the prayer of both is granted. This sinner has sought mercy and grace, and has not sought them in vain,—his sins are forgiven,—his place shall be in Paradise at the last day. But this monk has prayed that he may never stand near this sinner,—his prayer too is granted,—hell shall be his place, for there this sinner shall never come."

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## PARABLE XVII.

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### THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LUKE X. 30-37.

WE need not suppose the lawyer, who "*stood up*" and proposed to our Lord the question out of which this parable presently grew, to have had any malicious intention therein, least of all that deep malignity which moved questions like those recorded at John viii. 6; Matt. xxii. 16; which were, in fact, nothing less than snares for his life; we need not attribute to this lawyer even that desire to perplex and silence, out of which other questions had their rise (Matt. xxii. 23). For, in the first place, the question itself, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" was not an ensnaring one; it was not one like that concerning the tribute-money, which it might be hoped would put the answerer, however he replied, in a false position; and further, we may conclude from the earnestness of the Lord's reply, that the spirit out of which the question was proposed had not been altogether light or mocking; since it was not his manner to answer so the mere cavillers or despisers. The only ground for attributing an evil intention to this scribe, or lawyer (for Matt. xxii. 35, compared with Mark xii. 28, shows that "scribe" and "lawyer" are the same), is that he is said to have put the question to Christ, "*tempting him.*" But to tempt, in its proper signification, means nothing more than to make trial of, and whether the tempting be good or evil, is determined by the motive out of which it springs. Thus God "*tempts*" man, when He puts him to proof, that He may show to man what is in him, that He may show him sins, which else might have remained concealed even from himself (Jam. i. 12); He "*tempts*" man, to bring out his good, and to strengthen it (Gen. xxii. 1; Heb.

xi. 17); or if to bring his evil out, it is that the man may himself also become aware of some evil which before was concealed from him, and watch and pray against it;—it is to humble him and do him good in his latter end.\* Only Satan tempts man purely to irritate and bring out and multiply his evil. The purpose of this lawyer in tempting Jesus, if it was not on the one side that high and holy one, so as little seems it this deeply malignant on the other. The Evangelist probably meant nothing more than that he desired to put the Lord to the trial. Comparing Matt. xxii. 35 with Mark xii. 28-34, both records of the same conversation, we shall see that in the first the questioner is said to have proposed his question, as in the present case, tempting the Lord; while in St. Mark the Lord bears witness concerning the very questioner, a seeker and inquirer after the truth, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” We cannot, indeed, suppose that the question, on the present occasion, arose purely from love of the truth, or a desire to be further instructed in it; but the lawyer probably would fain make proof of the skill of this famous Galilæan teacher; he would measure his depths, and with this purpose he brought forward the question of questions, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Our Lord’s reply is as much as to say,—The question you ask is already answered; what need to make further inquiries, when the answer is contained in the words of that very law, of which you profess to be a searcher and expounder? What is written there concerning this great question? “How readest

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\* Πειράζειν=πειραν λαμβάνειν. Augustine very frequently describes the manner in which it can be said that God tempts, and the purposes which He has in tempting. thus (*Enarr. in Ps* lv. 1): Omnis tentatio probatio est, et omnis probationis effectus habet fructum suum. Quia homo plerumque etiam sibi ipsi ignotus est: quid ferat, quidve non ferat ignorat, et aliquando præsumit se ferre quod non potest, et aliquando desperat se posse ferre quod potest. Accedit tentatio quasi interrogatio, et invenitur homo a seipso, quia latebat et seipsum, sed artificem non latebat. Thus God tempts, as δοκιμασθῆς τῶν καρδιῶν. Satan, on the contrary, is *The tempter* (ὁ πειράζων=ὁ πειραστής). Cf. TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, 8.

thou?" That the lawyer should at once lay his finger on the great commandment which Christ Himself quoted as such on that other occasion just referred to, showed no little spiritual insight, proved him superior to the common range of his countrymen: he quotes rightly Deut. vi. 5, in connexion with Lev. xix. 18, as containing the quintessence of the law. Thereupon our Lord bears testimony to him that he has answered well; his words were right words, however he might be ignorant of their full import, of all which they involved: "Thou hast answered right; *this do*, and thou shalt live;" put this which thou knowest into effect; let it pass from dead uninfluential knowledge into living practice, and it will be well. Now at length the lawyer's conscience is touched; these last words have found him out: however he may have owned in theory the law of love, he has not been living in obedience to it. Still he would fain justify himself; if he has not been large and free in the exercise of love towards his fellow-men, it is because few have claims upon him: "True, I am to love my neighbour as myself; but who is my neighbour?"\* The very question, like Peter's, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" was not merely a question which might receive a wrong answer, but itself a wrong question, involving a wrong condition of mind, out of which alone it could have proceeded. He who asked, "Whom shall I love?" proved that he understood not what that love meant, of which he spoke; for he wished to have laid down before-

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\* Tholuck (*Auslegung der Bergpredigt*, Matt. v. 43) has an instructive inquiry on the interpretation which the Jews gave to the term "neighbour," in the law.—It is striking to see the question of the narrow-hearted scribe, "Who is my neighbour?" reappearing in one with whom one would think that he had little in common. I make this extract from Emerson's *Essays* (Ess. 2): "Do not tell me, as a good man did today, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent, I give to *such men as do not belong to me, and to whom I do not belong*. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison, if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities, &c."

hand how much he was to do, and where he should be at liberty to stop,—who had a claim and who not upon his love; thus proving that he knew little of that love, whose essence is that it has no limit, except in its own inability to proceed further, that it receives a law only from itself, that it is a debt which we must be well content to be ever paying, and not the less still to owe (Rom. xiii. 8).

Especially wonderful is the reply which our blessed Saviour makes to him, wonderful, that is, in its adaptation to the needs of him to whom it was addressed, leading him, as it does, to take off his eye from the object to which love is to be shown, and to turn it back inward upon him who is to show the love; for this is the key to the following parable, and with this aim it was spoken. “*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.*” He “*went down,*” or “*was going down,*” not merely because Jerusalem stood considerably higher than Jericho,—which last lay nearly six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean sea,—for the phrase would have its fitness in this respect,—but because the going to Jerusalem, as to the metropolis, was always regarded as a going *up* (Acts xviii. 22). The distance between the two cities was about a hundred and fifty stadia,—the road lying through a desolate and rocky region, “the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho” (Josh. xvi. 1), though the plain of Jericho itself (now Richa, and of old the second city in the land) was one of extraordinary fertility and beauty, the Tempe of Judæa, well watered, and abounding in palms (“the city of palm-trees,” Judg. i. 16), in roses, in balsam, in honey, and in all the choicest productions of Palestine.\* On his way he “*fell among thieves,*” or rather “*among robbers;*” for the word indicates such, and all their conduct is that of those violent men to whom one would apply this name rather than that. Josephus more than once mentions the extent to which Pales-

\* COTORICI *Itiner.*, quoted by Winer (*Realwörterbuch*, s. v. Jericho): Est in planitie sita peramplâ, montibus in theatri formam circumdatâ, amœnissimâ quidem et pinguisimâ, sed incultâ hodie, floribus tamen et herbis odoriferis abundantissimâ.

tine was infested with banditti;\* and from St. Jerome we learn that a particular part of the road leading from one of these cities to the other, was called the red or the bloody way,† so much blood had there been shed by them; and that in his own time there was at one point in this wilderness a fort with a Roman garrison, for the protection of travellers; so that the incident of the poor traveller falling in that very journey among robbers is taken from the life. We may suppose these, Arabs of the wilderness,‡ the same who infest the road to the present day, making it impossible even for the vast host of pilgrims to descend to the Jordan without a Turkish guard;§ such, having their hiding-place in the deep caves of the rocks, which everywhere afforded facilities to them, did their best to maintain the infamous character of the spot; for they “*stripped him of his raiment,*” and, because perhaps he made some slight resistance as they were spoiling him, or out of mere wantonness of cruelty, “*wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*”

As he lay bleeding in the road, “*by chance there came down a certain priest that way.*” The original would justify us in saying rather “*by coincidence*” || than “*by chance*,” by that wonderful falling in of one event with another, which often indeed seems to men but chance, yet is indeed of the fine weaving in, by God’s providence, of the threads of different men’s lives into one common woof. He brings the negative pole of one man’s need into contact with the positive of another man’s power of help, one man’s emptiness into relation with

\* *Antt.* xx. 6, 1; *B. J.* xi. 12, 5.

† *Onomast.* s. v. Adommim. There is a particularly impressive description of this dreary route in LAMARTINE’S *Travels in the Holy Land*. Indeed no travellers seem to have gone this journey without being deeply impressed with the wildness and desolation of the road.

‡ Jerome (*In Jerem.* iii. 2): Arabes, . . . quæ gens latrociniiis dedita, usque hodie incurSAT terminos Palæstinæ, et descendentiBUS de Jerusalem in Jericho obsidet vias.

§ STANLEY’S *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 416.

|| Συγκυρπτα, or oftener συγκύρησις, from σύν and κυπέω = τυγχάνω, the falling in of one event with another, exactly our English *coincidence*.

another's fulness. Many of our summonses to acts of love are of this kind, and they are those perhaps which we are most in danger of missing, through a failing to see in them this finger of God. He at least who went down that way missed *his* opportunity. There would be a fine irony in the supposition that he was one who was journeying from Jericho, which was a great station of the priests and other functionaries of the temple, to Jerusalem, there to execute his office before God "in the order of his course," or who, having accomplished his turn of service, was returning to his home. But whether this was so or not, at all events he was one who had never learnt what that meant, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" one rather who, whatever duties he might have been careful in fulfilling, had "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith;" for "*when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*"\* So likewise did a Levite, though in his cruelty there was an additional aggravation; for he, it might be out of curiosity, drew near, "*came and looked on him, and when he saw him,*" when he saw the miserable condition of the wounded man, claiming, as it did, instant help—for the life that remained was fast ebbing through his open gashes—after all could endure to pass forward without affording him the slightest assistance; "*he passed by on the other side.*" Thus did they, who made their boast in, and were the express interpreters of, that law, which was so careful in pressing the duties of humanity, that it had twice said, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass, or his ox, fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again" (Deut. xxii. 4; Exod. xxiii. 5). Here not a brother's ox or his ass, but a brother himself, was lying in his blood, and they hid themselves from him (Isai. lviii. 7).

*"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where*

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\* If the wounded man was a Jew, and it is very unnatural to assume him to have been any other, his countrymen (the priest and the Levite) were in this very far indeed from deserving even that limited praise which Tacitus gives them: *Apud ipsos misericordia in promptu.*



*he was.*" This man might have found the same excuses for hurrying on as those who went before him had done; for no doubt they *did* make excuses to themselves, they did, in some way or other, justify their neglect to their own consciences; as perhaps they said that there was danger, where one outrage had happened, of another happening,—that the robbers could not be far distant, and might return at any moment,—or that the sufferer was beyond the help of man, or that he who was found near him might himself be accused of having been his murderer. The Samaritan was exposed to at least the same danger in all these respects, as those that had passed before him, but he took not counsel of these selfish fears, for when he saw the wounded and bleeding man, "*he had compassion on him.*"\* While the priest and Levite,—marked out as those who should have been foremost in showing pity and exercising mercy,—were forgetful of the commonest duties of humanity, it was left to the excommunicated Samaritan, whose very name was a bye-word of contempt among the Jews, and synonymous with heretic (John viii. 48), to show what love was; and this, not as was required of them, to a fellow-countryman, but to one of an alien† and hostile race,

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\* This compassion, as the best thing he gave, is mentioned first; for Gregory the Great says with great beauty (*Moral.* xx. 36): *Exteriora etenim largiens, reum extra semetipsum præbuit. Qui autem fletum et compassionem proximo tribuit, ei aliquid etiam de semetipso dedit.*

† Our Lord calls the Samaritan a stranger (*ἀλλογενής*, Luke xvii. 18), one of a different stock. It is very curious how the notion of the Samaritans, as being a mingled people, composed of two elements, one heathen and one Israelitish, should of late universally have found way not merely into popular but into learned books; so that they are often spoken of as, in a great measure, the later representatives of the ten tribes. Christian antiquity knew nothing of this view of their origin, but saw in them a people of unmingled heathen blood (see testimonies in SUICER'S *Thes.* s. v. *Σαμαρείτης*, to which may be added Theophylact on Luke xvii. 15, *Ἀσσύριοι γὰρ οἱ Σαμαρεῖται*); and the Scripture itself affords no countenance whatever for this view, but much that makes against it. In 2 Kin. xvii., where the deportation of the Israelites is related, there is not a word to make us suppose that any were left, or that there afterwards was any blending of the Cuthites and other Assyrian colonists brought in, with a remnant of the original inhabi-

one of a people that had no dealings with his people, that anathematized them; even as, no doubt, all the influences with which he had been surrounded from his youth would have led him, as far as he yielded to them, to repay insult with insult, hate with hate, and wrong with wrong. For if the Jew called the Samaritan a Cuthite,—a proselyte of the lions

tants, whom they found still in the land. It is true that when Judah was carried away captive, many of the people were left still in the land: but we can easily explain why they should have been thus differently dealt with; their sins comparatively were smaller, and the Lord moreover had a purpose of bringing back the captivity of Judah. Winer (*Realwörterbuch*, s v Samaritaner) says that it is very unlikely that some out of the ten tribes were not left behind in the same manner. But 2 Kin. xxi. 13 seems to give the strongest testimony that there were none whatever. For there the Lord threatening Judah says, "I will stretch over Jerusalem *the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab*; and I will wine Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, and turneth it upside down." This, which was only a threat against Judah, in part averted by repentance, had actually been executed against Samaria (see Jer. vii. 15). That such an entire clearance of a conquered territory was not unusual, we may see from HERODOTUS, iii. 149, vi. 31. For an account of the process by which it was sometimes effected, and which the Persians may well have learnt from their Babylonian and Assyrian forerunners in empire, see p 134, note. The historian describes a Greek island which had undergone the process, as being delivered to a new lord, *ἐρημον εὐσαν ἀνδρῶν*. If the Samaritans had owned any Jewish blood in their veins, they would certainly have brought this forward, as mightily strengthening their claim to be allowed to take part with Zerubbabel and Ezra and the returned Jewish exiles in the rebuilding of the temple; but they only say, "We seek your God as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither" (Ezra iv. 2). When our Lord, at the first sending out of his Apostles, said, "Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" (Matt. x. 5), He was not, as some tell us, yielding to popular prejudice, but gave the prohibition because, till the Gospel had been first offered to the Jews, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," they had no more claim to it than any other Gentiles, being as much *ἀλλογενεῖς* (Josephus calls them *ἀλλοεθνεῖς*) as any other heathen. What is singular is, that the mistake is altogether of recent origin; the expositors of two hundred years ago are quite clear of it. Hammond speaks of the Samaritan in our parable as "being of an Assyrian extraction;" and Maldonatus: Samaritani origine Chaldæi erant; and Reland, *De Samaritanis*; and many more. For the opinion of Makrizi, the very accurate and learned Arabian geographer, concerning the origin of the Samaritans, an opinion altogether agreeing with that here stated, see S. DE SACY'S *Chrest. Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 177: and Robinson says (*Biblical Researches*): "The physiognomy of those we saw was not Jewish."

(2 Kin. xvii. 25),—an idolater who worshipped the image of a dove,—cursed him publicly in his synagogue,—prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection of life,—proclaimed that his testimony was naught and might not be received,—that he who entertained a Samaritan in his house was laying up judgments for his children,—that to eat a morsel of his fare was as eating swine's flesh,—and in general would rather suffer any need than be beholden to him for the smallest office of charity,—if he set it as an object of desire that he might never so much as *see* a Cuthite; the Samaritan was not behindhand in cursing, nor yet in active demonstrations of enmity and ill-will. We are not without evidences of this in the Gospels (John iv. 9; Luke ix. 53), and from other sources more examples of their spite may be gathered. While, for instance, the Jews were in the habit of communicating the exact time of the Easter moon to those of the Babylonian captivity, by fires kindled first on the Mount of Olives, which were then taken up from mountain top to mountain top, a line of fiery telegraphs which reached at length along the mountain ridge of Auranitis to the banks of the Euphrates, the Samaritans would give the signal on the day preceding the right one, so to perplex and mislead.\* And Josephus mentions that they sometimes proceeded much further than merely to refuse hospitality to the Jews who were going up to the feasts at Jerusalem; they fell upon and murdered many of them;† and once, which must have been to them most horrible of all, a Samaritan entering Jerusalem secretly, polluted the whole temple by scattering in it human bones.‡

But the heart of this Samaritan was not hardened; though so many influences must have been at work to harden and

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\* This fact is mentioned by Makrizi (see S. DE SACY'S *Chrest. Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 159), who affirms that it was this which put the Jews on making accurate calculation to determine the moment of the new moon's appearance. Cf. SCHOETTGEN'S *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 344.

† *Antt.* xx. 6, 1.

‡ JOSEPHUS, *Antt.* xviii. 2, 2; *B. J.* ii. 12, 3.

to steel it against the needs and distresses of a Jew; though he must have known that any Jew who was faithful to the judgments then current among his fellow-countrymen would not merely have left, but would have made it a point of conscience to leave, him in his blood, would have considered himself doing a righteous act therein. Exceedingly touching is here the minuteness with which all the details of his tender care toward the poor and unknown stranger, of whom all he knew was, that he belonged to a nation bitterly hostile to his own, are given. He "*bound up his wounds,*" no doubt with strips torn from his own garments, having first poured in wine to cleanse them, and then oil to assuage their smart, and to bring gently their sides together, these two being costly but well-known and highly esteemed remedies throughout the East.\* All this must have consumed no little time, and this too while there was every motive to hasten onward. But after he had thus ministered to the wounded man's most urgent needs, and revived in him the dying spark of life, he "*set him on his own beast,*" pacing himself on foot, "*and brought him to an inn,*" we may imagine that at Bachurim, and there renewed his care and attention. Nor even so did he account that he had done all; but before he departed on the morrow, with the considerate foresight of love, he provided for the further wants of the sufferer: for, "*he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I † will repay thee.*" He was probably journeying on some needful business to Jerusalem; a day or two would bring him back.

Beautiful as is this parable when thus taken simply according to the letter, and full of incentives to active mercy and

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\* PLINY, *II. N.* xxxi. 47. Both Greek and Latin physicians commended vinegar and oil, or wine and oil, to be used in cases of bruises and wounds.

† Let us not miss the *ἐγὼ ἀποδώσω*. "Trouble not the poor man upon that score; I will take those charges on myself;" or it might be, "Fear not thou to be a loser; I will be thy paymaster."

love, bidding us to "put on bowels of mercies," to be kind and tender-hearted; yet how much lovelier still, provoking how much more strongly still to love and good works, when, with most of the Fathers of the Church, with many too of the Reformers, we trace in it a deeper meaning still, and see the work of Christ, of the merciful Son of man himself, portrayed to us here. It has been objected to this interpretation, but unjustly, that it makes the parable to be nothing to the matter immediately in hand. For what is that matter? To magnify the law of love, to show who fulfils it, and who not. Inasmuch then as Christ Himself, He who accounted Himself every man's brother, in its largest extent fulfilled it, showed how we ought to love and whom; and inasmuch as it is his example, or rather faith in his love towards us, which is alone really effectual in causing us to "love one another with a pure heart fervently," He might well propose Himself and his act in succouring the perishing humanity, as the everlasting pattern of self-denying and self-forgetting love, and bring it out in strongest contrast with the selfish carelessness and neglect of the present leaders of the theocracy. They had not strengthened the diseased, nor healed the sick, nor bound up the broken, nor sought that which was driven away (see Ezek. xxxiv. 4), while He had bound up the broken-hearted (Isai. lxi. 1), and poured the balm of sweetest consolation into all wounded spirits. Moreover, even the adversaries of this interpretation must themselves acknowledge the facility with which all the circumstances of the parable yield themselves to it; and it certainly affords a strong presumption that a key we have in our hand is the right one, when it thus turns in the lock without forcing, when it adapts itself at once to all the wards of the lock, however many and complex. Of course, this deeper interpretation was reserved for the future edification of the Church. The lawyer naturally took, and was meant to take, the meaning which lay upon the surface; nor will the parable lose its value to us, as showing forth the pity and love of man to his fellow, because it also shadows forth the crowning act of mercy and love shown by the Son of man to the entire race.

If then we regard it as so doing, the traveller will be the personified human Nature, or Adam as he is the representative and head of the race. He has left Jerusalem, the heavenly city, the city of the vision of peace, and is travelling toward Jericho, he is going *down* toward it, the profane city, the city which was under a curse (Josh. vi. 26 ; 1 Kin. xvi. 34). But no sooner has he forsaken the holy city and the presence of his God, and turned his desires toward the world, than he falls under the power of him who is at once a robber and a murderer (John viii. 44), and by him and his evil angels is stripped of the robe of his original righteousness; nor this only, but grievously wounded, left full of wounds and almost mortal strokes, every sin a gash from which the life-blood of his soul is copiously flowing.\* Yet is he at the same time not altogether dead;† for as all the cares of the good Samaritan would have been expended in vain upon the poor traveller, had the spark of life been wholly extinct, so a recovery for man would have been impossible, if there had been nothing to recover, no spark of divine life, which by a heavenly breath might again be fanned into flame; no truth which, though detained in unrighteousness, might yet be delivered and extricated from it. When the angels fell, as it was by a free self-determining act of their own will, with no solicitation from without, from that moment they were not as one “*half dead*,”

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\* H. de Sto Victore (*Annot in Luc*) Homo iste . . . genus designat humanum, quod in primis parentibus supernam civitatem deserens, in hujus seculi et exili miseriam per culpam corruens; per antiqui hostis fraudulentiam veste innocentie et immortalitatis est spoliatum, et originalis culpæ vitiis graviter vulneratum. See AMBROSE, *Exp. in Luc* vii. 73, AUGUSTINE, *Enarr. in Ps.* cxxv. 6; and the sermon (*Hom. 34 in Luc*) which Jerome has translated out of Origen. For the later Gnostic perversions of the parable in this direction, see NEANDER, *Kirch. Gesch.* vol. v. p. 1121.

† H. de Sto. Victore: Quamvis enim tantâ malitiâ possit affici, ut nihil diligat boni, non tamen ignorantia tantâ excæcari potest, ut nihil cognoscat boni . . . Hostilis gladius hominem penitus non extinxit, dum in eo naturalis boni dignitatem omnino delere non potuit. Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* ii. 19): Ex parte quâ potest intelligere et cognoscere Deum, vivus est homo: ex parte quâ peccatis contabescit et premitur, mortuus est.

but altogether so, and no redemption was possible for them. But man is "*half* dead;" he has still a conscience witnessing for God: evil is not his good, however little he may be able to resist its temptations; he has still the sense that he has lost something, and at times a longing for the restoration of the lost. His case is desperate as concerns himself and his own power to restore himself, but not desperate, if taken in hand by an almighty and all-merciful Physician.

And who else but such a Divine Physician shall give him back what he has lost, shall heal and bind up the bleeding hurts of his soul? Can the law do it? The Apostle answers, it could not; "if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Gal. iii. 21).<sup>\*</sup> The law was like Elisha's staff, which might be laid on the face of the dead child, but life did not return to it the more (2 Kin. iv. 21); Elisha himself must come ere the child revive.<sup>†</sup> Or as Theophylact here expresses it: "The law came and stood over him where he lay, but then, overcome by the greatness of his wounds, and unable to heal them, departed." Nor could the sacrifices do better; they could not "make the comers thereunto perfect," nor "take away sins," nor "purge the conscience." The law, whether natural or revealed, could not quicken, neither could the sacrifices truly abolish guilt and reconcile us unto God. The priest and the Levite were alike powerless to help: so that in the eloquent words of a scholar of St. Bernard's,<sup>‡</sup> "Many

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<sup>\*</sup> The selection of this passage, Gal. iii. 16-23, for the Epistle on the Sunday (the thirteenth after Trinity) when this parable supplies the Gospel, shows, I think, very clearly the interpretation which the Church puts upon the parable. The Gospel and Epistle agree in the same thing, that the law cannot quicken; that righteousness is not by it, but by faith in Christ Jesus.

<sup>†</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Enarr. in Ps. lxx.* 15.

<sup>‡</sup> Gillebert. His works are to be found at the beginning of the second volume of the Benedictine edition of St Bernard. He carried on and completed the exposition of the Canticles which Bernard had left unfinished at his death.—Compare a noble passage in CLEMENS ALEX. (*Quis Dives Salu* 29): Τις δ' ἂν ἄλλος εἶη πλὴν αὐτοῦ ὁ Σωτήρ; ἢ τίς μᾶλλον ἡμᾶς ἐλεήσας ἐκείνου, τοὺς ὑπὸ τῶν κοσμοκρατόρων τοῦ

passed us by, and there was none to save. That great patriarch Abraham passed us by, for he justified not others, but was himself justified in the faith of one to come. Moses passed us by, for he was not the giver of grace, but of the law, and of that law which leads none to perfection ; for righteousness is not by the law. Aaron passed us by, the priest passed us by, and by those sacrifices which he continually offered was unable to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Patriarch and prophet and priest passed us by, helpless both in will and deed, for they themselves also lay wounded in that wounded man. Only that true Samaritan beholding was moved with compassion, as He is all compassion, and poured oil into the wounds, that is, Himself into the hearts, purifying all hearts by faith. Therefore the faith of the Church passes by all, till it reaches Him who alone would not pass it by"\* (Rom. viii. 3).

If it was absolutely needful to give a precise meaning to the oil and the wine, we might say with Chrysostom, that the wine is the blood of Passion, the oil the anointing of the Holy Spirit.† On the *binding up* of the wounds one might observe

σκότους ὀλίγου τεθανατωμένους τοῖς πολλοῖς τραύμασι, φόβοις, ἐπιθυμίαις, ὀργαῖς, λύπαις, ἀπάταις, ἡδοναῖς ; τούτων δὲ τῶν τραυμάτων μόνος ἰατρὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκκόπτων ἄρδην τὰ πάθη πρόβρίζα· οὐχ ὥσπερ ὁ νόμος ψιλὰ τὰ ἀποτελέσματα, τοὺς καρποὺς τῶν πονηρῶν φυτῶν, ἀλλὰ τὴν αἰτίαν τὴν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὰς ρίζας τῆς κακίας προσαγαγών· οὗτος ὁ τὸν οἶνον, τὸ αἷμα τῆς ἀμπέλου τοῦ Δαβίδ, ἐκχέας ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τὰς τετρωμένας ψυχάς, ὁ τὸ ἐκ σπλάγχνων πνεύματος ἔλαιον προσενεγκών καὶ ἐπιδαψιλευόμενος· οὗτος ὁ τοῦς τῆς ὑγείας καὶ σωτηρίας δεσμοὺς ἀγύτους ἐπιδείξας, ἀγάπην, πίστιν, ἐλπίδα· οὗτος ὁ διακονεῖν ἀγγέλους καὶ ἀρχὰς καὶ ἐξουσίας ἡμῖν ὑποτάξας ἐπὶ μεγάλῳ μισθῷ, διότι καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐλευθερωθήσονται ἀπὸ τῆς ματαιώτητος τοῦ κόσμου παρὰ τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῆς δόξης τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

\* The argument that Augustine uses more than once (as *Serm.* clxxi. 2), in proof that our Lord intended Himself to be understood by this Samaritan, is singular. He argues thus : Cum duo essent verba conviciosa objecta Domino, dictumque illi esset, Samaritanus es, et dæmonium habes, poterat respondere : Nec Samaritanus sum, nec dæmonium habeo ; respondet autem, Ego dæmonium non habeo. Quod respondit, refutavit : quod tacuit, confirmavit. Cf *Enarr. in Ps.* cxxxvi. 3.

† They were sometimes interpreted differently ; the oil as the blanda consolatio, the wine as the austera increpatio. Thus Bernard



that the sacraments are often spoken of in the language of the early Church as the *ligaments* for the wounds of the soul.\* It is moreover a common image in the Old Testament for the healing of all spiritual hurts.† When we find the Samaritan setting the wounded man on his own beast, and therefore of necessity himself pacing on foot by his side,‡ we can scarcely help drawing a comparison with Him, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,—the Son of man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, “who his own self bare our sins in his own body.” Neither is it far-fetched to see in the

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says of the good pastor: Samaritanus sit, custodiens et observans quando oleum misericordiæ, quando vinum fervoris exhibeat, and beautifully, and at more length, *In Cant.*, Serm. xlv 3 So too Gregory the Great (*Moral.* xx. 5) ‘Inesse rectoribus debet et juste consolans misericordia, et pie sæviens disciplina. Hinc est quod semivivi illius vulneribus, qui a Samaritano in stabulum ductus est, et vinum adhibetur et oleum, ut per vinum mordeantur vulnera, per oleum foveantur quatenus unusquisque qui sanandis vulneribus præest, in vino morsum distinctionis adhibeat, in oleo molliorem pietatis per vinum mundentur putrida, per oleum sananda foveantur. And very beautiful is the prayer into which in another place he has resolved this whole history (*Exp in Ps. li*). Utinam, Domine Jesu, ad me misericordiâ motus digneris accedere, qui descendens ab Jerusalem in Jericho, proruens scilicet de summis ad infima, de vitalibus ad infirma, in angelos tenebrarum meidi, qui non solum gratiæ spiritualis mihi vestimentum abstulerunt, sed etiam plagis impositis semivivum reliquerunt Utinam peccatorum meorum vulnera, datâ mihi recuperandæ salutis fiduciâ, alliges, ne deterius sæviant, si sanari desperent. Utinam oleum mihi remissionis adhibeas, et vinum compunctionis infundas. Quod si in jumentum tuum me imposueris, de terrâ inopem, pauperem de stercore suscitabis. Tu es enim qui peccata nostra pertulisti, qui pro nobis quæ non rapueras exsolvist. Si in stabulum me Ecclesiæ tuæ duxeris, corporis et sanguinis tui me refectione cibabis Si curam mei egeris, nec præcepta tua prætereo, nec frementium rabiem bestiarum incurro. Custodiâ enim tuâ indigeo, quamdiu carnem hanc corruptibilem porto. . Audi ergo me, Samaritane, spoliatum et vulneratum, fientem et gementem, invocantem et cum David clamantem, Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.

\* Augustine not precisely so: Alligatio vulnerum est cohibitio peccatorum; the staunching of the ever-flowing fountain of evil in the heart.

† Cf. Ps. cxlvi. 3 (LXX). ‘Ο ἰώμενος τοὺς συντρίμμινους τὴν καρδίαν, καὶ δεσμένων τὰ συντρίμματα αὐτῶν.

‡ Lyser: Suo quasi incommodo nostra commoda quæsit.

inn the figure of the Church, the place of spiritual refection, in which the healing of souls is ever going forward,—by some called on this last account a hospital,—whither the merciful Son of man brings all those whom He has rescued from the hand of Satan, and in which He cares for them evermore.\* In harmony with this we find Christ's work continually set forth in Scripture as a work of healing; for instance, Mal. iv. 2; Hos. xiv. 4; Ps. ciii. 3; Matt. xiii. 15; Rev. xxii. 2; and typically, Num. xxi. 9.

And if, like the Samaritan who was obliged on the morrow to take his departure,† He is not always in body present with those whose cure He has begun, if for other reasons it is expedient even for them that He should go away, yet He makes for them a rich provision of grace during his absence, and till the time of his coming again. It would be entering into curious minutiae, which rather tend to bring discredit on this scheme of interpretation, to affirm decidedly of the two pence, that they mean either the two sacraments, or the two testaments, or the word and the sacraments, or unreservedly to accede to any other of the ingenious explanations which have been offered for them. It is sufficient that they signify all gifts and graces, sacraments, powers of healing, of remission of sins, or other powers which Christ has left with his Church to enable it to keep house for Him till his return. As the Samaritan took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said, "*Take care of him;*"—even so the Lord Jesus said unto Peter, and in him to all his fellow Apostles, having first promised unto them heavenly gifts, and richly furnished them for their work, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs." To them, and in them to all that succeed them, He has committed an economy of the truth, that as stewards of the mysteries of God, they

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\* Augustine brings out another side of the similitude: *Stabulum est Ecclesia, ubi reficiuntur viatores de peregrinatione redeuntes in eternam patriam*; or it is an inn (*πανδοχεῖον*), because (ORIGEN, *Hom. 84 in Luc*) universos volentes introire suscipiat.

† Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc. vii. 78*): *Non vacabat Samaritano huic diu in terris degere: redeundum eo erat, unde descenderat.*

may dispense those mysteries as shall seem best for the health and salvation of his people. And as it was said to the host, "*Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee ;*" \* so the Lord has promised that no labour shall be in vain in Him, that He will count what is done to the least of his brethren as done unto Him, that they who "feed the flock of God," "not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind," they, "when the chief Shepherd shall appear," "shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. v. 2, 4).†

It is difficult enough to admire the divine wisdom with which the Saviour, having brought to an end this affecting parable, reverses the question of the lawyer, and asks, "*Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ?*" The lawyer had asked, "Who is the neighbour to whom I am bound to show the service of love?" But the Lord asks, "Who is a neighbour, he who shows love, or he who shows it not?"—for herein lay the great lesson, that it is not the object which is to determine the love, but that love has its own measure in itself; it is like the sun, which does not ask on what it shall shine, or what it shall warm, but shines and warms by the very law of its own being, so that there is nothing hidden from its light and heat. The

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\* Melancthon: Si quid supererogaveris, solvam; quasi dicat: Accedunt labores, pericula, inopia consilii, in his omnibus adero et juvabo te.

† Cyprian's application of the parable (*Ep.* 51) forms a sort of connecting link between these two interpretations, the literal and the allegorical: the wounded man is a sinning brother, in this particular case one who had not stood steadfast in the time of persecution. Cyprian, who desired to follow the milder course with these lapsed, and to readmit them to Church communion, exclaims: Jacet ecce saucius frater ab adversario in acie vulneratus. Inde diabolus comatur occidere quem vulneravit, hinc Christus hortatur ne in totum pereat quem redemit. Cui de duobus assistemus, in cujus partibus stamus? Utrumne diabolo favemus ut perimat, et semianimem fratrem jacentem, sicut in evangelio sacerdos et Levites, præterimus? An vero ut sacerdotes Dei et Christi, quod Christus et docuit et fecit imitantes, vulneratum de adversarii faucibus rapimus, ut curatum Deo judici reservemus? Cf. AMBROSE, *De Pœnit.* i. 6; and CHRYSOSTOM, *Adv. Jud.*, *Orat.* viii. 3.

lawyer had said, "Declare to me my neighbour; what marks a man to be such?—is it one faith, one blood, the bonds of mutual benefits, or what else, that I may know to whom I owe this debt of love?" The Lord rebukes the question by holding up before him a man, and that man a despised Samaritan, who so far from asking that question, freely and largely exercised love towards one who certainly had none of the signs such as the lawyer conceived would mark out a neighbour in his sense of the word. The parable is a reply, not to the question, for to that it is no reply,\* but to the spirit out of which the question proceeded. It says, "You ask, Who is your neighbour? I will show you a man who asked not that question, and then your own heart shall be judge between you and him, which had most of the mind of God, which was most truly the doer of his will, the imitator of his perfections." The parable is an appeal to a better principle in the querist's heart, from the narrow theories and the unloving system in which he had been trained.

It is to be hoped that through no unwillingness to acknowledge the truth, though it has something of that appearance, the lawyer in reply to the Lord's question, "Who was this poor man's true neighbour?" circuitously replies, "*He who showed mercy on him;*" grudging to give the honour directly and by name to a Samaritan.† But having acknowledged this, whether grudgingly or freely, "*Go,*" said the Lord to him, now, we trust, a humbler and a larger-hearted man, "*Go, and do thou likewise.*" These last words will hardly allow us to agree with those who in later times have maintained that this parable and the discourse that led to it are, in fact, a lesson on justification by faith—that the Lord sent

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\* Maldonatus is the only commentator I have seen who has fairly put this, and acknowledged the difficulty which is on the face of the parable. It is one of the many merits of this most intolerant and most abusive Jesuit (Maldonatus maledicentissimus), that he never slights a difficulty, nor pretends not to see it, but fairly and fully states it, whether he can resolve it or not.

† So Bengel: Non invitus abstinet legisperitus appellatione propria Samaritæ.

the questioner to the law, to the end that, being by that convinced of sin and of his own shortcomings, he might discover his need of a Saviour. His intention seemed rather to make the lawyer aware of the great gulf which lay between his knowing and his doing,—how little his actual exercise of love kept pace with his intellectual acknowledgment of the debt of love due from him to his fellow-men: on which subject no doubt he had secret misgivings himself, when he asked, "*Who is my neighbour?*" It is true, indeed, that this our sense of how short our practice falls of our knowledge, must bring us to the conviction that we cannot live by the keeping of the law, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified,—so that here also we shall get at last to faith as that which alone can justify; but this is a remoter consequence, and not, as it seems to me, the immediate purpose of the parable. .

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## PARABLE XVIII.

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### *THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT.*

LUKE xi. 5-8.

THE connexion between this parable and the words that go before is easy to be traced. The disciples had asked to be taught in what words they should pray: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." He graciously gives them that perfect form which has ever since been the choicest treasure of the Church; but having done so, He instructs them also by this parable *in what spirit* they must pray, even in the spirit of persevering faith, "continuing instant in prayer." There is the same argument as in the parable of the Unjust Judge, one from the less to the greater, or more accurately, from the worse to the better,—but with this difference, that here the narrow-heartedness and selfishness of man is set against the liberality of God, while there it is the unrighteousness of man which is tacitly contrasted with the righteousness of God. The conclusion is, if churl man can yet be won by prayer and importunity to give, and unjust man to do right, how much more certainly shall the bountiful Lord bestow, and the righteous Lord do justice.\* And perhaps there is this further difference, that here it is *intercessory* prayer, prayer for the needs of others, in which we are bidden to be instant; while there it is rather prayer for the supply of our own needs. Yet must we not urge, in either case, the illustration so far, as to conceive of prayer as though it were an overcoming of God's reluctance, when it is, in fact,

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\* Augustine (*Ep. cxxx. 8*): Ut hinc intelligeremus, si dare cogitur, qui cum dormiat, a petente excitatur invitatus, quanto det benignius, qui nec dormire novit, et dormientes nos excitat ut petamus.

a laying hold of his highest willingness.\* For though there is an aspect under which God may present Himself to us, similar to that of the Unjust Judge and of this churlish neighbour, yet is there ever this difference,—that his is a *seeming* neglect and unwillingness to grant, theirs was a *real*. Under such an aspect of seeming unwillingness to hear, did the merciful Son of man present Himself to the Syro-Phœnician woman (Matt. xv. 21). But why? Not because He was reluctant to give, but because He knew that her faith was strong enough to bear this trial, and that, though the trial for the moment might be hard, it would prove a blessing to her in the end, more mightily calling out that faith; since faith ever needs to find some resistance before it can be called out in any strength. In like manner the Angel of the Lord, the great Covenant Angel, contended with Jacob, and wrestled with him all the night, yet allowing himself at the last to be overcome by him, left a blessing behind him; and Jacob henceforth was Israel; in other words, he was permanently lifted up through that conflict into a higher state, as was expressed by that nobler name which henceforth he bore,—“for as a *Prince* hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Gen. xxxii. 28).

The parable with which now we have to do rests on a humble and familiar incident of common life; and, spoken to humble men, it may easily have come within the limits of their own experience: “*Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?*” I do not see in

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\* This is finely expressed by Dante (*Parad.* 20), in words which have as much a theological as a poetical interest:

Regnum cœlorum violenza pate  
 Da caldo amore e da viva speranza,  
 Che vince la divina volontate,  
 Non a guisa che l' uomo all' uom sovranza,  
 Ma vince lei, perchè vuole esser vinta,  
 E vinta vince con sua beninanza.

these words any deeper meaning than lies on the surface; yet the exposition would be incomplete if it failed to note that they have afforded ample scope for allegorical and mystical interpretations, and some of considerable beauty in themselves. For instance, it has been said that the guest newly arrived is the spirit of man, which, weary of its wanderings in the world, of a sudden desires heavenly sustenance, something that will truly nourish and satisfy it,—begins to hunger and thirst after righteousness. But the host, that is, man, in so far as he is “sensual, having not the Spirit,” has nothing to set before this unexpected guest, and in this his spiritual poverty and distress\* is here taught to appeal unto God, that from Him he may receive that which is bread indeed, and spiritual nourishment for the soul.† There is, besides, another interesting adaptation of the parable, which we owe to Augustine. He is urging upon his hearers the duty of being able to give a reason for their faith, a reason not merely defensive, but one which shall win and persuade: and this, because it might often happen that some one from the yet heathen world, or it might be a heretic, or even a nominal Catholic, weary of his wanderings in error, weary of the bondage of sin, and desiring now

\* “*At midnight*” In mediâ tribulatione constitutus. Augustine.

† Bede (*Hom. in Luc. xi.*): Amicus qui venit de viâ, ipse noster est animus, qui toties a nobis recedit, quoties ad appetenda terrena et temporalia foris vagatur. Redit ergo, cœlestique alimoniam refici desiderat, cum in se reversus superna ceperit ac spiritualia meditari. De quo pulchre qui petierat, adjungit, se non habere quod ponat ante illum, quoniam anima post seculi tenebras Deum suspiranti, nil præter eum cogitare nilque libet intueri. And Bernard (*In Rogat. Serm.*): Amicum venientem ad me, non alium intelligo quam meipsum, cum transitoria deserens, ad cor redeo. Venit amicus de regione longinquâ, ubi pascere porcos, et ipsorum siliquas insatiabiliter esurire solebat. Venit fame laborans, sed heu me! pauperem eligit hospitem, et vacuum ingreditur habitaculum. Quid faciam huic amico misero et miserabili? Fateor amicus est, sed ego mendicus. Quid venisti ad me, amice, in necessitate tantâ? Festina, inquit, discurre, suscita amicum tuum illum magnum, quo majorem dilectionem nemo habet, sed neque substantiam amphorem. Clama et dic, Amice, commoda mihi tres panes. Compare Augustine (*Quæst. Evang. ii. qu. 21*); and a discourse which is not Augustine's, but has sometimes been attributed to him (*Serm. 85, Appendix*).



to know something of the Christian faith, but lacking confidence or opportunity to go to the bishop or catechists, might betake himself to one of them, desiring fuller instruction in the faith. While this was possible, he therefore urges upon all, that they have what to communicate; or if, when such occasion arises, when such a friend comes to them, craving spiritual hospitality, they find they have nothing to set before him, Augustine instructs them out of this parable what they should do, and to whom they should betake themselves for the supply of their own needs and the needs of their friend,—that they go to God, praying that He would teach them, that so they might be enabled to teach others.\* Vitringa's explanation† is a modification of this last. With him the guest is the heathen world; the host who receives him, the servants and disciples of Jesus, who are taught from this parable that they can only nourish with bread of life those that come to them, as they themselves shall receive the same from God; which therefore they must solicit with all perseverance and constancy of supplication,—at all events a most important truth, whether it is here to be found or not, for those that have to feed the flock of Christ.‡—In like manner, in the “three” loaves various scriptural triads have been traced; as for instance, it has sometimes been said that the host craving the three loaves craves the knowledge of the Trinity, of God

\* *Serm. cv. 2* Venit tibi amicus de viâ, id est, de vitâ hujus sæculi, in quâ omnes velut peregrini transeunt, nec ullus quasi possessor manet, sed omni homini dicitur: Refectus es, transi, age iter, da venturo locum. Aut forte de viâ malâ, hoc est, de vitâ malâ, fatigatus nescio quis amicus tuus, non inveniens veritatem, quâ auditâ et perceptâ beatus fiat, sed lassatus in omni cupiditate et egestate sæculi, venit ad te, tanquam ad Christianum, et dicit: Redde mihi rationem, fac me Christianum. Et interrogat quod forte tu per simplicitatem fidei nesciebas, et non est unde reficias esurientem, et te admonitus invenis indigentem. Tibi forte sufficiebat simplex fides, illi non sufficit. Nunquid deserendus est? nunquid de domo projiciendus? Ergo ad ipsum Dominum, ad ipsum cum quo familia requiescit, pulsa orando, pete, insta.

† *Erklar. d. Parab.* p. 763

‡ Augustine: Unde vivo, inde dico; unde pascor, hoc ministro. Compare a sermon by Guerrius, *Bernardi Opp* Ben ed vol. ii. p. 1023.

in his three persons;\* sometimes again, it is the three choicest gifts and graces of the Spirit, faith, hope, and charity, which he desires may be his;† with more of this kind.

When he from within replies, "*Trouble me not,*" and gives as his reason "*the door is now shut;*" more is implied in this than merely closed, he would say, "The house is made up for the night the door barred and bolted; and at this unseasonable hour I cannot disturb my household by rising and giving thee." "*My children are with me in bed:*" these words, if we may believe Theophylact, belong not merely to the outward setting forth of the parable, but have their spiritual equivalents, and mean, "All, who by earlier application have obtained right to be called my children, have secured their admission into my kingdom, and are now resting with me there; it is too late to apply now, when the door is closed, and the time past."‡ The lesson to be learned would then be this, that through earnest importunate prayer, even lost opportunities may be recovered and made good.§

"*I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise|| and give him as many as he needeth.*" In the "*importunity*" of our version we have rather a softening of the original word, which might be rendered by a stronger term;

\* AUGUSTINE, *Enarr. in Ps. cii. 5*; *Quæst. Evang. ii. 21.*

† Euthymius: "*Ἀπρὸς τὰς θρησκευτικὰς τῶν ψυχῶν διδασκαλίαν.*"

‡ Augustine: Quid pulsas sine tempore, qui piger fuisti cum tempore? Dies fuit, et in lumine non ambulasti: nox supervenit, et pulsare cœpisti.

§ It is possible that *παῖδια*, which we translate "*children,*" would be better translated "*servants;*" and the sense then would be, "I cannot myself come, and I have none whom I can send; my servants as well as myself are gone to rest." It is clear that *τὰ παῖδια* has been so understood by Augustine (*Ep. cxxx. 8*): *Jam cum suis servis dormientem petitor instantissimus et molestissimus excitavit.*

|| Most translations miss the distinction between the *ἀναστὰς* and *ἐγερθεὶς* of this verse, rendering both, as ours has done, by the same word. But the word would scarcely have been varied, unless a difference had been intended. The second means rather,—being roused, thoroughly wakened.

it is his "*shamelessness*"\* which extorts the gift. At the same time, the shamelessness which is here attributed to the petitioner is greatly mitigated by the consideration, that it is not for himself but for another, and that he may not be wanting in the sacred duties of hospitality, that he so pertinaciously urges his request.† Through this pertinacity‡ he at length obtains, not merely the three which he asked, but "*as many as he needeth*;" like that woman already referred to, from whom the Lord at first seemed to have shut up all his compassion, but to whom at last He opened the full treasure-house of his grace, and bade her to help herself, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Augustine too observes, that he who would not at first so much as send one of his household, himself now rises, and supplies all the wants of his friend; and adds on the return of prayers not being always immediate many excellent observations,—as this: "When sometimes God gives tardily, He commends his gifts, He does not deny them;"—"Things long desired, are more sweet in their obtainment; those quickly given, soon lose their value;"—and again: "God withholds his gifts for a time, that thou mayest learn to desire great things greatly."§—Faith, and patience, and humility are all called into exercise by this temporary denial of a request. It is then seen who will pray always, and not faint; and who will prove but as the leopard, which if it does not attain its prey

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\* *'Avalðeia*. The Vulgate gives it by a happily chosen word, *improbitas*, which, like the adjective from which it is derived, may describe unwearied labour in a good cause as well as in a bad.

† In the same manner Abraham's pleading with God (Gen. xviii. 23-33), which almost rises into a like *avalðeia*, is not the asking any thing for himself, but intercession for the people of Sodom.

‡ Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. cii. 5*). *Extorsit tædio quod non possit merito*. The Jews have a proverb, *Impudentia est regnum sine coronâ*; and again they say, *Impudentia etiam coram Deo proficit*. Von Meyer (*Blätter für höhere Wahrheit*, vol. v. p. 45) has some interesting remarks on the *avalðeia* of this petitioner, and how it is reconcilable with the humility which is praised in the publican (Luke xviii. 13).

§ *Cum aliquando tardius dat, commendat dona, non negat*.—*Diu desiderata dulcius obtinentur, cito data vilescent*:—and again, *Ut discas magna magne desiderare*.

at the first spring, turns sullenly back, and cannot be induced to repeat the attempt.\*

The parable concludes with words in which the same duty of prayer is commended, and now no longer in a figure, but plainly: "*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*"† The three repetitions of the command are more than mere repetitions; since to "*seek*" is more than to "*ask*," and to "*knock*" than to "*seek*," and thus in this ascending scale of earnestness, an exhortation is implicitly given, not merely to prayer, but to increasing urgency in prayer, even till the suppliant carry away the blessing which he requires, and which God is only waiting for the due time to arrive that He may impart to him.‡ All that we have here is indeed a commentary on words of our Lord spoken at another time, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

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\* Stella: Sunt multi qui naturæ sunt et conditionis leonispardi, qui si primo saltu vel secundo non assequitur prædam, non amplius eam insequitur. Ita isti sunt qui primâ oratione vel secundâ non exauditi, protinus ab oratione cessant, et impatientiæ notâ signantur.

† Augustine (*De Serm. Dom. in Mon. ii. 21*) had made only one of these three commands (Matt. vii. 7) to have direct reference to prayer, while the other two he referred to other forms of earnest striving after the kingdom of God,—but in his *Retractationes* he says, no doubt more accurately. Ad instantissimam orationem omnia referuntur. Their position in relation to this parable leaves no doubt on the matter.

‡ Augustine: Deus ad hoc se peti vult, ut capaces donorum ejus fiant, qui petunt; and again: Non dat nisi petenti, ne det non capienti.

## PARABLE XIX.

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### *THE RICH FOOL.*

LUKE xii. 16-21

IN the midst of one of our Lord's most interesting discourses an interruption occurs. One of his hearers had so slight an interest in the spiritual truths which He was communicating, but had so much at heart the redressing of a wrong, which he believed himself to have sustained in his worldly interests, that, as would seem, he could not wait for a more convenient season, but broke in upon the Lord's teaching with that request which gave occasion for this parable, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." It has been sometimes taken for granted, that this man who desired a division of the inheritance, had no right to what he was here claiming, and was only seeking to make an unfair use of the Saviour's influence. But how much does this supposition weaken the moral. All men, without any especial teaching, would condemn such unrighteousness as this. But that love of the world, which, keeping itself within limits of decency and legality, yet takes all the affections of the heart from God, and robs divine things of all their interest,—against that men have need to be continually warned; and such a warning is here; a warning, not against unrighteousness, but against "covetousness" (ver. 15); which may display itself in the spirit and temper in which we hold or reclaim our own quite as truly as in the undue snatching at that of others. From this man's confident appeal to Jesus, made in the presence of the whole multitude, it is probable that his brother did withhold from him a share of the patrimony which fell justly to his share. But it was the extreme inopportune-ness of the season which he chose for urging his claim, that

showed him as one in whom the worldly prevailed to the danger of making him totally irreceptive of the spiritual, and that drew this warning from the lips of the Lord. For that he should have desired Christ as an umpire or arbitrator,—and such only the word in the original means (see Acts vii. 27, 35; Exod. ii. 14); such too the Lord, without publicly recognized authority, could only have been,\*—this in itself had nothing sinful. St. Paul himself recommended this manner of settling differences (1 Cor. vi. 1-6); and how weighty a burden this arbitration afterwards became to the bishops of the Church is well known.†

In the request itself there was nothing sinful, yet still the Lord absolutely refused to accede to it; He declined here, as in every other case, to interfere in the affairs of civil life. It was indeed most true, that his word and doctrine, received into the hearts of men, would modify and change the whole external framework of society, that his word and his life was the seed out of which a Christendom would evolve itself; but it was from the inward to the outward that He would work. His adversaries more than once sought to thrust upon Him the exercise, or at least to entangle Him in the assumption, of a criminal jurisdiction, as in the case of the woman taken in adultery (supposing that passage to belong to the true Gospel of St. John); or else in a jurisdiction civil and political, as in the matter of the Roman tribute. But each time He carefully avoided the snare which was laid for Him, keeping Himself within the limits of the moral and spiritual world, as that from which alone effectual improvements in the outer life of man could proceed. The word with which the Lord

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\* Grotius explains *μεριστής*: Qui familiæ heriscundæ, communi dividundo, aut finibus regundis arbiter sumitur. Lachmann has admitted *κρίτης*, in the place of *δικαστής*, into his text.

† Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. cxviii* 115) complains of this distraction from spiritual objects, and that he was not allowed to say to those who came to him with cases for arbitration, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" And St. Bernard, writing to Pope Eugenius, especially warns him against this distraction of mind, arising from the multitude of these worldly causes which would be brought before him.

puts back this claimant of his interference, "*Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?*" contains an allusion, which it is impossible to miss, to Exod. ii. 14. The Lord, almost repeating the words then spoken, at once declares that He will not fall into the error into which Moses had fallen, that, namely, of thrusting Himself into matters that did not concern Him.\* But though He thus refuses this man what he sought, He gives him something much better than he sought, a warning counsel, not addressed indeed to him only, but to that whole multitude present; though suggested by his untimely petition: "*Take heed, and beware of covetousness:*"† and this for the deepest reason of all, because "*a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*"

For the full understanding of these words it is important that we entirely know what is that "*life*" of man, which thus does not stand in the abundance of his outward goods. And here it may be observed, that the Greek language is rich in the possession of two words for "*life*," while we with the Latins are obliged to content ourselves with one. The Greek has one word to express the life which we live,‡ another to express that life by which we live;§ and it is this last which the Lord declares does not stand in the multitude of a man's earthly goods. A man may have his living, the sustenance of the life which he is leading, of his βίος, out of his earthly goods, nay more, they will themselves be sometimes called by this name (Mark xii. 44; Luke viii. 43; xv. 2; xxi. 4; 1 John iii. 17), but his life itself, his ζωή, he cannot have from them. The breath of his nostrils is of God; not all his worldly possessions, be they ever so large, will retain his spirit an instant

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\* See Hammond's *Paraphrase* (in loc.).

† Ἀπὸ πάσης πλεονεξίας, Lachmann, Tischendorf: ab omni avaritiâ, Vulg. The emphasis on this "all" is strikingly brought out by Augustine (*Serm. cvii. 3*), as though Christ were herein saying to each that stood by: Forte tu avarum et cupidum diceres, si quæreret aliena. Ego autem dico cupide et avarum non appetas nec tua . . . Non solum avarus est qui rapit aliena; sed et ille avarus est qui cupide servat sua.

‡ Βίος, vita quam vivimus.

§ Ζωή, vita quâ vivimus.

longer than God pleases. And if this be true of his life, his ζωή, in its lower acceptation, as the animating principle of his earthly existence, how much more evident yet is it in respect of the true life of man, that life which is identical with peace, joy, blessedness here, and with immortality hereafter, that it is not from a man's worldly goods? They may overlay, hinder, strangle this life; they did so in the case of this earthling; but they cannot produce it: this life is *from* God, as it is *to* God. It appears to me that this double meaning lies here in the word "*life*," and in the negation of the possibility of a man's life coming from his goods; and that they fail to draw out from these words all their force who understand "*life*" in this present passage, either exclusively in the lower, or, which I did in former editions of this work, exclusively in the higher sense.

And this truth, that a man's life consisteth not in his goods; that his earthly life may come suddenly to an end, and he be *so* taken from the very midst of all which *he* has, as to give too sure an augury that, with the extinction of the earthly life, *all* was extinguished for him,—this the Lord proceeds to illustrate by the parable which follows. "*The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.*" "*The prosperity of fools shall destroy them*" (Prov. i. 32): this was long since declared; it is a truth to which this man sets his seal, his prosperity ensnaring him in a deeper worldliness, drawing out the selfish propensities of his heart into stronger action.\* In this respect, how deep a knowledge of the human heart the warning of the Psalmist displays, "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them." It might, at first sight, appear that the time when men would be in greatest danger of setting their heart upon riches would be when they saw them escaping from their grasp, perishing from under their hand. But all experience testifies the contrary, that earthly losses are remedies for covetousness, while increase in worldly goods is

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Ambrose: Dat tibi fecunditatem Deus, ut aut vincat aut condemnet avaritiam tuam.



that which chiefly provokes to it, serving, not as water to quench, but as fuel to feed, the fire.\* “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase” (Eccl. v. 13). St. Basil, in the opening of his noble sermon† upon this parable, observes: “There are two manners of temptations: either afflictions torment the heart, as gold in the furnace, through the trial of faith working patience; or often the very prosperities of life are to many in place of other temptation.”

But it seems a certain exaggeration when the same author explains, as many others have done, the following words, “*He thought within himself, saying, What shall I do?*” as though they were the utterance of one brought into sore straits and difficulties through the very abundance, for the sake of which others were envying him,—as though they were the anxious deliberations of one that was now at his wit’s end, and knew not which way he should turn, being as painfully perplexed through his riches as others are through their poverty.‡ Rather we should say, that the curtain is here drawn back, and we are admitted into the inner council-chamber of a worldling’s heart, one rejoicing over his abundance, and realizing to the very letter the making “provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” As far as he may be said to be perplexed, this is his perplexity: “*I have no room where*

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\* Plutarch, in his excellent little treatise, *Περὶ φιλοπλουτίας*, applies to the covetous the line,

*Τὸ φάρμακόν σου τὴν νόσον μείζω ποιεῖ*

and the same truth is confessed in the Latin proverb: *Avarum irritat pecunia, non satiat*. Compare Seneca, *Ad Helv.* 11: and the fine Eastern tale of Abdallah the camel-driver has the same moral. See also AUGUSTINE, *Serm.* L. 4.

† Ed. Bened. Paris, 1722, vol. ii. p. 43; and in the new Paris reprint, vol. ii. p. 60.

‡ So Augustine: *Turbavit hominem copia plusquam inopia*. And Grotius quotes in this view: *Crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam*. Thus too Gregory the Great (*Moral.* xv. 22): *O angustia ex satietate nata! De ubertate agri angustatur animus avari. Dicens namque, Quid faciam? profecto indicat quia votorum suorum affectibus pressus, sub quodam rerum fasce laborabat*. But Unger’s is a better account of these words: *Opulentum describit parabola elate deliberantem*.

to bestow my fruits." It has been well replied to him, "Thou hast barns,—the bosoms of the needy,—the houses of the widows,—the mouths of orphans and of infants."\* If he had listened to the prudent admonition of the son of Sirach, "Shut up alms in thy storehouses" (xxix. 12), he would not have found his barns too narrow. To one thus ignorant where to bestow his fruits, and so in danger of losing them, Augustine gives this earnest affectionate admonition: "God desires not that thou shouldst lose thy riches, but that thou shouldst change their place; He has given thee a counsel, which do thou understand. Suppose a friend should enter thy house, and should find that thou hadst lodged thy fruits on a damp floor, and he, knowing by chance the tendency of those fruits to spoil, whereof thou wert ignorant, should give thee counsel of this sort, saying, Brother, thou lovest the things which thou hast gathered with great labour: thou hast placed them in a damp place; in a few days they will corrupt;—And what, brother, shall I do?—Raise them to a higher room;—thou wouldst listen to thy brother suggesting that thou shouldst raise thy fruits from a lower to a higher floor; and thou wilt not listen to Christ advising that thou raise thy treasure from earth to heaven, where that will not indeed be restored to thee which thou layest up; for He bids thee lay up earth that thou mayest receive heaven, lay up perishable things that thou mayest receive eternal."†

This would have been *his* wisdom, to provide thus for himself "bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not" (ver. 33). But he determines otherwise; he has quite another scheme: "*I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.*" "Observe," exclaims Theophylact on these words, "another folly—'my goods' and 'my fruits,'—for he did not count that he had these from God; else as a steward of God,

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\* Ambrose (*De Nabuthe*, 7): Habes apothecas, inopum sinus, viduarum domus, ora infantium. There is much else there that is excellent on this parable. Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Serm.* xxxvi. 9.

† *Enarr. in Ps.* xlviii. 9; cf. *Enarr. in Ps.* xxxviii. 6.

he would otherwise have disposed of them ; but he counted them the products of his own labours ; wherefore, separating them exclusively for himself, he said, '*my goods and my fruits.*'" Yet according to the world's judgment there was nothing sinful in all this. His riches were fairly gotten ;\* in what way indeed could a man's goods have been more innocently increased than thus through the blessing of God upon his labours in the field ? But this very fact makes the warning the more solemn, showing us as it does how a selfish unthankfulness may turn even the best and most innocent gifts of God into occasions of sinning against Him. Nor yet was there anything which the world would condemn in the plans which he laid out for his future enjoyment, in the decent Epicureanism which he meditated : "*I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast† much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*" Having now at last, as he imagines, secured himself against every thing that could disturb his felicity, he determines to rest from his labours, to enjoy that ease and quiet from which hitherto the anxious acquisition of wealth had debarred him ; to put heathen language into the mouth of this truly heathen man, he will not defraud his genius any more. His plans of felicity, it may be observed, rise no higher than to this satisfying of the flesh ; so that there is an irony as melancholy as it is profound in making him address this speech, not to his body, but to his *soul*—to that soul, which though thus capable of being dragged down into the basest service of the flesh, imbodyed and imbruted, was also capable of being informed by the Divine Spirit, and of knowing and loving and glorifying God. He expects he shall thus nourish his soul "*for many years*"

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\* Augustine (*Serm. clxxviii* 2) : Non limite perturbato, non spoliato paupere, non circumvento simplice.

† The heathen moralist could upbraid such folly as is imbodyed in this "*thou hast*."

— *tanquam*

*Sit proprium quidquam, puncto quod mobilis horæ,  
Nunc prece, nunc pretio, nunc vi, nunc morte supremâ,  
Permutet dominos, et cedat in altera jura.*—HOR. *Ep.* ii. 2. 171.

(see Eccclus. v. 1), he boasts not merely of tomorrow, but of many years to come; he expects, like Job, to multiply his days as the sand; his felicity shall not soon come to an end, but tomorrow shall be as today, and much more abundant.\* Compare with all this the words of the son of Sirach (Eccclus. xi. 18, 19), forming as they do a remarkable parallel: "There is that waxeth rich by his weariness and pinching, and this is the portion of his reward: whereas he saith, I have found rest, and now will eat continually of my goods; and yet he knoweth not what time shall come upon him, and that he must leave those things to others, and die." So was it with this man; as he was saying this to himself, "*God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*" "*Thou fool*"†—this title is opposed to the opinion of his own prudence and foresight which he entertained,—"*this night,*" to the many years that he promised to himself,—and that "*soul,*" which he purposed to nourish and make fat, it is declared shall be inexorably "*required,*" and painfully rendered up.‡ It has been sometimes asked, in what way did God speak to the man? Was it by a sudden presentiment of approaching death, by some strong alarm of conscience, by

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\* Tertullian: Provementibus fructibus ampliacionem horreorum, et longæ securitatis spatia cogitavit.

† See a striking Epistle (the 101st) of Seneca, on the sudden death of a rich acquaintance, where, among other things, he says: Quam stultum est ætatem disponere! ne crastino quidem dominamur. O quanta demencia est, spes longas inchoantium. Emam, ædificabo, credam, exigam, honores geram; tum demum lassam et plenam senectutem in otium referam. See, too, more than one of the Greek epigrams expressing the same truth, that with all his heaping a man is not able ζωῆς σπεύσαι μέτρα περισσώτερα: and this surely is what the Lord intends to affirm, Matt. vi. 27,—that no one can add to his term of life (ἡλικία); for while many would fain so add to their length of life, who ever wanted to add to his stature? and it is not merely a great addition, such as a cubit, which he could not make, but the smallest, not even an inch, which would naturally be the thing expressed, if to deny that had been the intention of the Lord.

‡ Vitringa (*Erklär. der Parab.* p. 781) makes here an ingenious reference to 1 Sam. xxv. 25, and observes that this rich fool is the Nabal of the New Testament: "As his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him." Compare ver. 36-38 there with this ver. 20 of our parable.

some mortal sickness at this instant falling upon him, or by what other means? We are not to understand a speaking to him in any of these ways. It was not with him as with the Babylonian king, to whom, even while the word was yet in his mouth, there came a voice from heaven, announcing that the kingdom was departed from him (Dan. iv. 31). Here we presume nothing of the kind, but, more awful still, that while those secure deliberations were going on in the thoughts of the man, this sentence was being determined in the counsels of God;\* for it is thus that the Lord in heaven derides the counsels of sinners, seeing them in their vanity and folly, and knowing how soon He will bring them to nothing.† Not *as yet* was there any direct communication between God and the man's soul; any message or warning concerning the near impending judgment; but even at the very moment when God was pronouncing the decree that the thread of his life should in a few moments be cut in twain, he was promising himself as confidently as ever the long spaces of an uninterrupted security.

Our translation has lost something of the force of the original, in not retaining its present form; it is not merely that his soul "*shall be required*," it "*is required*" of him; the doom is so fearfully near that the present can alone express its nearness; and also we have lost, as it seems to me, something in another change, which the form of the sentence has undergone. Why should it not have been, "*This night they require thy soul of thee*," leaving the question as to who "*they*" are in the fearful obscurity which enwraps it in the original? Probably the avenging angels are intended, the ministers of judgment (cf. Job xxxiii. 22: "Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life *to the destroyers*"); so that we have here the reverse of that "carried by the

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\* God said to him this, in the words of Grotius: Non revelando, sed decernendo.

† This will come out yet more strongly if with the best Mss. we read not the vocative ἀφρον, but the nominative ἀφρων, Fool! It is so in Lachmann's text.

angels into Abraham's bosom," of Luke xvi. 23. There is a force in the word "*required*" (we may compare Wisd. xv. 8: "His life which was lent him *shall be demanded*"), which Theophylact well brings out: "For like pitiless exactors of tribute, terrible angels shall require thy soul from thee unwilling, and through love of life resisting. For from the righteous his soul is not *required*, but he commits it to God and the Father of spirits, pleased and rejoicing, nor finds it hard to lay it down, for the body lies upon it as a light burden. But the sinner who has enfolded his soul, and embodied it, and made it earthy, has prepared to render its divulsion from the body most hard: wherefore it is said *to be required* of him, as a disobedient debtor that is delivered to pitiless exactors."\* Compare Job xxvii. 3: "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God *taketh away* his soul?" God "*taketh it away*;" for he is not as a ship, which has long been waiting in harbour, and when the signal is given, lifts joyfully its anchors, and makes sail for the haven of eternity: but like the ship by fierce winds dragged from its moorings, and driven furiously to perish on the rocks. The mere worldling is torn from the world, which is the only sphere of delight which he knows, as the fabled mandrake was torn from the earth, shrieking and with bleeding roots.†—"Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" "He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Ps. xxxix. 6). Solomon long before had noted this as constituting part of the vanity of wealth, and the eager pursuit after wealth, namely, the uncertainty to whom after the death of the gatherer it would devolve, no less than of the uses to which the heir would turn it

\* So, on the other side, the Jewish doctors taught that the angel Gabriel drew gently out with a kiss the souls of the righteous from their mouths: to something of which kind, the phrase so often used to express the peaceful departure of the saints, *In osculo Domini obdormivit*, must allude.

† See LUCIAN'S inimitable dialogue, the sixteenth (*Cataplus*), for a commentary, in its way, on these words "*shall be required*," as well as on those which next follow.

(Eccles. ii. 18, 19), "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it to the man that shall be after me: and who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" (Eccles. ii. 26; Ps. xlix. 6-20; Jer. xvii. 11; Job xxvii. 16, 17).\*

"*So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God,*" or, "does not enrich himself toward God;" for the two clauses of the verse are parallel, and in the second not merely a state or condition, the *being* rich, but as in the *first*, an effort and endeavour, the *making* oneself rich, though in a manner altogether different, is assumed. Self and God are here contemplated as the two poles between which the soul is placed, for one or other of which it must determine, and then make that one the end of all its aims and efforts. If for the first, then the man "*layeth up treasure for himself,*" and what the end of this is, we have seen; the man and his treasure, so far at least as it is *his* treasure, come to nothing together. He has linked himself to the perishable in his inmost being, and he must perish with it. His very enriching of himself outwardly, while that is made the object of his being, is an impoverishing of himself inwardly, that is, toward God and in those which are the true riches: for there is a continual draining off to worldly objects, of those affections which were given him that they might find their satisfying object in God; where his treasure is, there his heart is also. Now the Scripture ever considers the heart as that which constitutes a man truly rich or poor. He that has no love of God, no large spiritual affections, no share in the unsearchable riches of Christ, no sympathies with his brethren, is in fact "wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked," and shall one day find out that he is so, however now he may say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and

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\* So the Greek epigrammatist on the painful gatherer of wealth for others:

Οὗτος ὅποια μέλισσα πολυτρήτοις ἐνὶ σίμβλοις  
Μοχθήσει, ἐτέρων δρεπτομένων τὸ μέλι.

have need of nothing:” he is poor towards God; he has nothing with God; he has laid up in store no good foundation against the time to come. On the other hand, he only is truly rich, who is rich toward God, who is rich in God; who has made the eternal and the unchangeable the object of his desires and his efforts. He in God possesses all things, though in this world he were a beggar; and for him to die will not be to quit, but to go to, his riches.\*

Our Lord, having thus warned his hearers against covetousness, and knowing how often it springs from a distrust in God’s providential care, proceeds to teach them where they may find that which shall be the best preservative against all such over-anxious thoughts for the future, namely, in the assurance of the love and care of a heavenly Father (ver. 22-30), so that the connexion is as close as it is beautiful between this parable and the instructions which immediately follow. There is also, perhaps, in the words of ver. 24 a distinct reminiscence of it.

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\* I cannot give better what seems to me the true view of the passage than in Cyprian’s words addressed to the covetous (*De Opere et Eleem*): Obsederunt animum tuum sterilitatis tenebræ, et recedente inde lumine veritatis, carnale pectus alta et profunda avaritiæ caligo cæcavit: pecuniæ tuæ captivus et servus es, . . . servas pecuniam, quæ te servata non servat, patrimonium cumulas, quod te pondere suo gravius oneriat. nec meministi quid Deus responderit diviti exuberantium fructuum copiam stultâ exultatione jactanti . . . Quid divitis tuis solus incubas? qui in pœnam tuam patrimonii tui pondus exaggeras; *ut quo locupletior sæculo fueris, vauperior Deo fias?* See SUIDER’S *Theos.* s. v. *πλουτέω*.



## PARABLE XX.

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### *THE BARREN FIG-TREE.*

LUKE xiii. 6-9.

THE eagerness of men to be the first narrators of evil tidings, an eagerness which can only spring from a certain secret pleasure in them,\* though that be most often unacknowledged even to themselves, was perhaps what moved some to hasten to the Lord with tidings of a new outrage which Pilate had committed. These persons understood rightly that He was speaking, in the words which conclude the last chapter, of the severe judgments which men bring upon themselves through their sins: but, as is the manner of most men, instead of applying these words to their own consciences, they made application of them only to others. Of the outrage itself,—which agrees well with the quarrel between Herod and Pilate (Luke xxiii. 12), and might have been either its cause or its consequence,—there is no historical notice. For it is little probable that the scattering or slaying by Pilate of some fanatical Samaritan insurgents, recorded by Josephus, which is here adduced by some earlier commentators, is the event referred to; it being somewhat too bold a change, as Lightfoot observes, to make rebelling Samaritans out of these sacrificing Galileans. But we know that a revolt, or at least a tumult, was always dreaded at the great festivals; a very small spark serving to kindle into a blaze the smouldering elements of Jewish resistance to the hated Roman dominion, and to provoke measures of severest retaliation on the part of the Roman

\* Two languages at least bear melancholy witness to the existence of such a feeling, having a word to express this joy at calamities:—the German, *Schadenfreude*; and the Greek, *ἐπὶ χαίρειν*.

governor,\* Among the numberless atrocities which ensued, it is nothing strange that this, which must have been but as a drop of water in the great sea, should have remained unrecorded. It is no more wonderful than that the slaughter of a few infants in a small country town like Bethlehem should find no place in profane history. The troublesome insurrectionary character for which the Galilæans were noted,† may have been the motive or excuse for this outrage, which yet must have been perpetrated not in Galilee, where, as subjects of Herod, these men would not have been exposed to Pilate's cruelty, but at Jerusalem, where also alone sacrifices were offered (Lev. xvii. 8, 9; Deut. xii. 26, 27; John iv. 20). There is something significant in the language in which their slaughter is narrated; they were men "*whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices*"—thus blood was mingled with blood, their own with that of the slain beasts which they offered.‡ It is probable from our Lord's reply, that the narrators urged this circumstance, or at least would have had it understood, as a peculiar evidence of the anger of God against the sufferers. If men might have been safe anywhere, or at any time, it would have been at the altar of God, and while in the act of offering sacrifices unto Him. But here, as they probably meant to infer (just as Job's friends inferred some

\* Josephus, *Antt.* xx. 5, 3.

† The Galilæans are described by Josephus as industrious and brave; but, though not in the least considered heretical like the Samaritans, by the other Jews, they were yet held in a certain degree of contempt by them, partly because their blood was considered less pure, many heathens being mingled among them, whence their country is called "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt. iv. 15; see 1 Macc. i. 15, Γαλιλαία ἀλλοφύλων),—and partly because their faith was considered by the Jewish doctors as less strictly orthodox (John vii. 52; see i. 46; Acts ii. 7), they in many observances departing from the Jewish tradition. They spoke a bad dialect (Matt. xxvi. 73), characterized particularly by a confusion of gutturals, and a broad Syriac pronunciation, so as to give occasion to the strangest mistakes, and often to be unintelligible to a native of Jerusalem (see LIGHTFOOT's *Chorograph. Cent. lxxxvi.* 87).

‡ A tumult in the temple itself, pitilessly quelled in blood by Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, some thirty years before this, is related at length by Josephus, *Antt.* xvii. 9, 3.

great guilt on his part from the greatness of his calamities), there must have been some hidden enormous guilt, which rendered the very sacrifices of these men to be sin,—not a propitiation of God, but a provocation,—so that they themselves became piacular expiations, their blood mingling with, and itself becoming part of, the sacrifices which they offered.

But whether exactly this was what they meant or not, the Lord at once laid bare the evil in their hearts, rebuking the cruel judgments which they certainly had formed concerning those that perished: “*Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?*” He does not deny that they were sinners, justly obnoxious to this or any other severest visitation from God, but He does deny that their calamity marked them out as sinners *above all other* of their fellow-countrymen; and then He leads his hearers, as was ever his manner (see Luke xiii. 23; John xxi. 22), to take their eyes off from others, and to fix them upon themselves: “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” In these last words we are exactly taught how rightly to use the calamities which befall others; what their significance is, as regards ourselves;—we are taught to regard them as loud calls to an earnest repentance. For instead of exalting ourselves above and against the sufferers, as though we were more righteous than they, and on this account exempt from like tribulations, we are on the contrary to recognize that whatever befalls another, might justly have befallen ourselves. So it will be ever felt by all who, not altogether ignorant of their own sinfulness, and of the holiness of God, apply any right measure to their own actual transgressions against the law of God. Moreover, when we have learned to see in ourselves the bitter root of sin, we shall learn to acknowledge that whatever deadly fruit it bears in another, it might have borne the same or worse, under like circumstances, in ourselves. But when this is felt, it will be no longer possible to triumph over the doom of any sinner. The thoughts of a man, thus taught to know himself, will fall back on his own life and on his own heart. He will see in the chastise-

ment which has overtaken another, the image of the chastisement which might justly have overtaken himself; he will see in it a message of warning addressed to himself. For he will not deny, as neither does our Lord here deny, the intimate connexion between sin and suffering; but it is the sin of the race which is linked with the suffering of the race—not, of necessity at least, the sin of the individual with his particular suffering.\* So far from denying this connexion, the more the Christian conscience is unfolded in him, the more freely he will acknowledge it, the more close and intimate will it appear. At every new instance of moral and physical evil which he encounters in a world which has departed from God, he will anew justify God as the Author of all good, even when He asserts Himself negatively as such, in the misery of man as he is a sinful creature separated from his God, no less than positively, in the blessedness of man as he is redeemed and reunited with Himself.

Our blessed Lord, to set the truth He would fain enforce

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\* STRAUSS (*Leben Jesu*, vol. ii. pp. 84-90) terms the faith in a connexion between sin and suffering, a "vulgar Hebrew notion," from which this passage might at first sight appear to clear the Lord, but which such other passages as Matt. ix. 2, John v. 14, lay again at his door, or at that of those who profess to have reported his words; and adds that this passage and those absolutely contradict one another. He will not see that what Christ condemns is this, the affirming that any man's particular calamity is the consequence of his particular sin. He affirms, and all Scripture affirms, that the sum-total of the calamity which oppresses the human race is the consequence of the sum-total of its sin; nor does He deny the relation in which a man's actual sins may stand to his sufferings. What He does deny is, man's power to trace the connexion, and therefore his right in any particular case to assert it. And this, instead of being a "vulgar Hebrew notion," is one of the most deeply rooted convictions in the universal human heart, witnessed for by the proverbs of all nations, inextricably entwined in all language—a truth which men may forget or deny in their prosperity, but which in the hour of calamity they are compelled to acknowledge, when this confession is ever extorted from them, Our sin hath found us out. Thus was it with Joseph's brethren; in the hour of their own affliction they remembered their own sin: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, . . . therefore is this distress come upon us" (Gen. xlii. 21: cf. 1 Kin. xvii. 18; Judg. i. 7; Acts xxviii. 4). There are some excellent observations upon this subject in HENGSTENBERG's *Authentic d. Pentateuches*, vol. ii. p. 577, seq.

yet more plainly before his hearers, Himself brings forward another instance of a swift destruction overtaking many persons at once: "*Those eighteen, on whom the tower in Siloam\* fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?*" Neither in this case were uncharitable judgments to find place, as though these were sinners *above all men*, as though they owed a larger debt† to God than others. But while none were to attribute a pre-eminence in guilt to those who perished, yet here also, in these accidents, in this disharmony of outward nature, all were to recognize a call to repentance; partly as these swift calamities should convince them of the uncertain tenure of life, and how soon therefore the day of grace might be closed for them; but chiefly as awakening in them a sense and consciousness of sin. For the discords of outward nature, storms and floods, earthquakes and pestilences, and so too all disasters such as that one here referred to, are parts of that curse, that subjection of the whole creation to vanity, consequent on the sin of man. All were to speak to sinners in the same warning language: "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" There is a force in the original word (*ὁσαύτως*), which our English "*likewise*," from its frequent lax usage as a synonym for "*as well*," fails to give. The threat is, that *they* shall literally *in like wise* perish, in a manner similar to that in which these perished. And certainly the resemblance is more than accidental between these two calamities here adduced, and the ultimate destruction which did overtake the rebellious Jews, as many as refused to obey the Lord's bidding and to repent.

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\* This tower was, from its name, probably in the immediate neighbourhood of the fountain of Siloam, though Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* vi. 7, 2) would seem to distinguish a region of Siloam from the fountain bearing that name. Though the notices of Siloam are so numerous, both in the Scriptures and in the Jewish historian, modern topographers are altogether at issue concerning its true position.

† Literally, "Think ye they were *debtors* above all men?" a remarkable phrase, selected for its peculiar fitness here, and with reference no doubt to chapter xii. 58, 59 (cf. Matt. v. 25; vi. 12; xviii. 24; Luke vii. 41).

As the tower of Siloam fell and crushed eighteen of the dwellers at Jerusalem, exactly so multitudes of its inhabitants were crushed beneath the ruins of their temple and their city; and during the last siege and assault of that city, there were numbers also, who were pierced through by the Roman darts—or more miserably yet, by those of their own frantic factions\*—in the courts of the temple, in the very act of preparing their sacrifices, so that literally their blood, like that of these Galileans, was mingled with their sacrifices, one blood with another.

Those two calamities then are adduced as slight foretastes of the doom prepared for the whole rebellious nation. If the warning was taken, if they would even now bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that doom might still be averted: but if not, if they refused to return, then these calamities would in the end be headed up by that one great and final catastrophe, which would leave no room for repentance. In the mean while they were to see in the fact that as yet the strokes descended upon them for warning, and not the stroke for excision, a proof of the long-suffering of God, not willing that any should perish: and as Olshausen observes,—“the discourse of Jesus, severe and full of rebuke, is closed by a parable, in which the merciful Son of man again brings the side of grace prominently forward. He appears as the Intercessor for men before the righteousness of the heavenly Father, as He who obtains for them space for repentance. This idea of the deferring of the judgment of God, so to leave men opportunity to turn, runs through all the Holy Scripture; before the deluge, a period of a hundred and twenty years was fixed (Gen. vi. 3); Abraham prayed for Sodom (Gen. xviii. 24); the destruction of Jerusalem did not follow till forty years after the ascension of the Lord; and the coming again of Christ is put off through the patience of God (2 Pet. iii. 9).”

This parable then is at once concerning the long-suffering

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\* Josephus, *B. J.* v. 1, 3: Πολλοὶ . . . πρὸ τῶν θυμάτων ἔπεσον αὐτοί. Cf. ii. 2, 5.

and the severity of God. "*A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard.*" We might at first expect that a vineyard would be for vines alone; but Stanley observes on this parable: "The peculiarity of the image—that of a *fig-tree* in a *vineyard*,—however unlike to the European notion of a mass of unbroken vine-clad hills, is natural in Palestine, where, whether in cornfields or vineyards, fig-trees, thorn-trees, apple-trees are allowed to grow freely wherever they can get soil to support them."\* The vineyard here must be the world, and not, as in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, the kingdom of God: in the midst of the world the Jewish people were set and appointed that they should bear much fruit, that they should bring much glory to God (Deut. iv. 6). Yet though the parable was directly pointed at them, it is also of universal application; for as Israel according to the flesh was the representative of all and of each who in after times should be elected out of the world to the privileges of a nearer knowledge of God, therefore a warning is herein contained for the Gentile Church, and for every individual soul.† Indeed there is personal application made of the image which supplies the groundwork of the parable, by the Baptist (Matt. iii. 10), and of an image very nearly the same by Christ Himself (John xv. 2).—"And he came and sought fruit thereon." There is a wonderful significance in the simple image running through the whole of Scripture, according to which men are compared to trees, and their work to fruit,‡—the fruit being the organic

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\* *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 413.

† Such application of it Ambrose makes (*Exp. in Luc. vii. 171*): Quod de Judæis dictum, omnibus cavendum arbitror, et nobis maxime: ne fecundum Ecclesiæ locum vacui meritis occupemus: qui quasi melogranata benedicti, fructus ferre debemus internos, fructus pudoris, fructus conjunctionis, fructus mutue caritatis et amoris, sub uno utero Ecclesiæ matris inclusi: ne aura noceat, ne grando decutiat, ne æstus cupiditatis exurat, ne humoris imber elidat.

‡ BENGEI (*in Matt. vii. 16*): Fructus est, quod homo, tanquam arbor, ex bonâ vel malâ indole suâ, omnes interiores facultates permeante, scaturit. Doctrina undecunque compilata et linguae alligata non est fructus; sed id omne quod doctor aliquis ex suo corde promit et profert, in sermone et actione, ceu quiddam ex intimâ suâ constitutione

produce and evidence of the inner life, not something arbitrarily attached or fastened on from without (Ps. i. 3; Jer. xvii. 8; John xv. 2, 4, 5; Rom. vii. 4). It is a comparison which helps greatly to set forth the true relation between faith and works, which relation is, in fact, just as plainly declared by our Lord, when He says, "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Luke vi. 43), as by St. Paul in any of his Epistles. There are three kinds of works spoken of in the New Testament, which may all be illustrated from this image: first, *good* works, when the tree, being made good, bears fruit of the same character;\* then *dead* works,† such as have a fair outward appearance, but are not the living outgrowth of the renewed man,—fruit, as it were attached and fastened on from without, alms given that they may be gloried in, prayers made that they may be seen, works such as were most of those of the Pharisees; and lastly, *wicked* works,‡ when the corrupt tree bears fruit manifestly of its own kind. Here it is, of course, those good fruit, which the tree is accused of not bearing: both the other kinds of fruit the Jewish nation abundantly bore.

What is here parabolically related was on another occasion typically done in a kind of *sermo realis* by the Saviour: "seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon" (Mark xi. 13). But He then, as the master of the vineyard now, "*found none.*" Long since the prophets had upbraided their people, and laid this charge against them, that though ordained to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God, they had fallen from their high calling,

fluens, ut lac quod mater præbet ex se. See an admirable sermon by Augustine (*Serm.* 72) on the tree and its fruits, as setting forth the relation between a man and his works.

\* Ἔργα Θεοῦ (John vi. 28), καλὰ ἔργα (Tit. ii. 7), ἀγαθὰ ἔργα (1 Tim. ii. 10), ἔργα πίστεως (1 Thess. i. 3).

† Ἔργα νεκρά (Heb. ix. 14), and sometimes ἔργα νόμου (Gal. ii. 16).

‡ Ἔργα πονηρά (1 John iii. 12), ἔργα τοῦ σκότους (Rom. xiii. 12), τῆς σαρκός (Gal. v. 19).



and brought forth either no fruit or bitter fruit (Isai. v. 2, 7; Jer. xv.; and, if our version is to stand, Hos. x. 1).

For "*three years*" the master of the vineyard complains that he had come seeking fruit from this fig-tree, and always in vain. Of these "*three years*" many explanations have been offered. Augustine understands by them the times of the natural law,—of the written law,—and now, at last, of grace. Theophylact: "Christ came thrice, by Moses, by the prophets, and thirdly in his own person; or, when application of the parable is made to the individual,—in childhood, in manhood, in old age." Olshausen thinks they may refer to the three years of the Lord's open ministry upon earth; but Grotius had already observed against this view, that if the three years are chronological, the one year more, which at the intercession of the dresser of the vineyard is granted to the tree, ought certainly to be chronological also, whereas not one, but forty years of grace were allowed to the Jews, before their final destruction.—"*Cut it down*" (see Isai. v. 5, 6; Matt. vii. 19; Luke xix. 41-44); "*why\* cumbereth it the ground?*" St. Basil beautifully observes the love which breathes even in the threatenings of God. "This," he says, "is peculiar to the clemency of God toward men, that He does not bring in punishments silently or secretly; but by his threatenings first proclaims them to be at hand, thus inviting sinners to repentance." Truly there is a blessed sense in which that old proverb, which so finely expresses the noiseless approach of the divine judgments, "*The gods have feet of wool*" (Dii laneos habent pedes), is *not* true. Before the hewing down begins, the

\* We have missed the "*also*" here (*ivarí kai tήν γῆν karapyēi.*), which is really the key-word of the sentence: Wherefore should the tree stand, when, besides being itself barren, it *also* injures the soil in which it is set? The Vulgate has held it fast: Ut quid *etiam* terram occupat? or as it has been better rendered: Quare *insuper* terram reddit sterilem? and in De Wette's German Translation: Warum macht er *auch noch* das Land unfruchtbar? Gregory the Great (*Hom. 31 in Evang.*) shows that it had not escaped him: Postquam enim se perdidit, quærendum est cur et alios premat. And Bengel: Non modo nil prodest, *sed etiam* laticem avertit, quem e terrâ sucturæ erant vites, et soles interpellat, et spatium occupat.

axe is laid at the root of the tree (Matt. iii. 10) ; laid there, as prompt and at hand for immediate use, though as yet no blow has been struck ; but laid there also, that if possible this sign of what is threatened may avert the actual fulfilment of the threat\* (2 Chron. xxxiii. 10). The "*cumbering*"† of the ground implies something more than that it occupied the place which might have been filled by another and a fruit-bearing tree. The barren tree *mischiefed* the land, spreading injurious shade, and drawing off to itself the fatness and nourishment which should have gone to trees that would have rendered a return. Nor otherwise was it with the Jewish Church, which not merely did not itself bring forth fruits of righteousness, but injured the ground in which it was planted. Through them the name of God was blasphemed among the

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\* Augustine : Si damnare vellet, taceret. Nemo volens ferire dicit, Observa ; and Chrysostom (*De Pœnit Hom.* 7, ad finem) : Ἀπειλεῖ τὴν τιμωρίαν, ἵνα φύγωμεν τὴν πείραν τῆς τιμωρίας φοβεῖ τῷ λόγῳ, ἵνα μὴ κολάσῃ τῷ ἔργῳ. We have a parallel, Heb. vi. 7, 8. The earth which beareth thorns and briers is there described as *καράρας ἐγγύς* ; but though thus "*neigh* unto cursing," the curse has not lighted on it yet ;—it is fore-announced, that so it may not arrive.

† The word "*cumbereth*" is not altogether adequate ; nor is it very easy to see what induced its selection. It first appears in Tyndale's translation in the Geneva, "*Why keepeth it the ground barren*?" takes its place, but it reappears in the authorised version. Doubtless the verb "*to comber*" (cognate with the German *kummern*) had a stronger and more extensive sense in early English than it has retained in later use, but mainly the sense of harassing or annoying. Like the *occupat* of the Vulgate, which is evidently too weak, it fails to give us the *καταργεῖ* (= *ἀργὸν* or *ἀεργὸν ποιεῖ*, incertem reddit, Euripides, *Phæn.* 753) of the original. Impedit, which appears to have been in the old Italic, is better, for the tree is charged not merely with being negatively, but positively evil, it marred and mischiefed the soil beneath and around it. Gregory the Great : Stat desuper arbor infructuosa, et subtus terra sterilis jacet. Infructuosæ arboris desuper umbra densatur, et solis radius ad terram descendere nequaquam permittitur. Corn. à Lapide : Terram inertem et sterilem reddit, tum umbrâ suâ, tum radicibus suis, quibus succum terræ vicinis vitibus eripit et præripit. Even so we have in Shakespeare :

"The noisome weeds that without profit suck  
The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers."

*Καταργεῖν* is a favourite word with St. Paul, occurring no less than twenty-six times in his Epistles ; and only here besides in the N. T. We have *ἀργούς* and *ἀκάπους* joined together, 2 Pet. i. 8. See SUIJER'S *Thes.* s. v.

Gentiles (Rom. ii. 24); they hindered the spread of the knowledge of God among other nations, through the mischievous influences of their pride and hypocrisy (Matt. xxiii. 13, 15); even as it is true of every individual sinner, that he is not merely unprofitable to God, but has a mischievous influence; by his evil example, by his corrupt maxims, he is a hindrance and a stumblingblock to others in the way of their attainment of salvation.

The dresser of the vineyard, who pleads for the tree, and would, if it might be, avert its doom, saying, "*Lord, let it alone this year also,*" is manifestly the Son of God Himself, the Intercessor for men (Job xxxiii. 23; Zech. i. 12; Heb. vii. 25); yet not as though the Father and the Son had different minds concerning sinners, not as though the counsels of the Father were wrath, and of the Son mercy; for righteousness and love are not qualities in Him, who *is* Righteousness and who *is* Love; they cannot, therefore, be set one against the other, since they are his essential being. Yet, on the other hand, we must not, while escaping this error, fall into the opposite, letting go the reality of God's wrath against sin, —the reality of the sacrifice of Christ, not merely on the side with which it looks towards men, but also on the side with which it looks towards God: the death of Christ was really a propitiation of God, not merely an assurance of God's love towards sinners. The way of escape from both these errors is shown to us in those words: "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8); "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. i. 20). The sacrifice, though of necessity outwardly brought to pass in time, "now manifest in these last times for you," yet took place in the purpose of Him who offered, and of Him who accepted it, before all time, or rather, out of time; so that we must not conceive of man as ever not contemplated by God in Christ: there was no change in God's mind concerning the sinner,\* because

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\* Augustine (*Serm.* ccliv 2): Interpellat misericors misericordem. Qui enim se volebat exhibere misericordem, ipse sibi opposuit intercessorem.

He who beholdeth the end from the beginning, had beheld him from the first as reconciled and reconstituted in his Son (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). In this view we may consider the high-priestly intercession of Christ as having found place and been effectual even before He passed from earth into the heavens,—before He had carried his own blood into the true Holy of holies:\* for to that intercession all the long-suffering of God toward sinners is to be referred;—"The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it" (Ps. lxxv. 3). Some of the Fathers see here allusion also to the intercessory work, which the Church, in its healthy members, is ever carrying forward on behalf of its sick members, or that of the Church for the world.† No doubt such intercession is always going forward, and has a real worth before God (Gen. xviii. 23-33; xx. 7; Exod. xxxii. 11; Job xlii. 8; 1 Sam. xii. 19, 23; 2 Kin. xix. 24; Jer. xv. 1; 1 Tim. ii. 1-4; Jam. v. 14-18; 1 John v. 16); and such need not here be of necessity excluded; but at the same time, it seems simpler and more satisfactory, with Theophylact and others, to refer this primarily to that one Intercessor, on whose intercession that of all others must ultimately rest. It is plain, too, that *He* must be meant, for the pleader now is the same who but for this pleading should have executed the sentence. But to Him only to whom all judgment is committed could the command have been given, "*Cut it down*;" or if to any beside Him, it could only have been to the angels, as the ministers and fulfillers of his will: to men it could in no case belong (Matt. xiii. 29, 30).

This great Intercessor pleads, as we well know, for men,

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\* Cocceus and his followers, as is well known, laid much stress on the distinction between the *ἀρπείσεις* (Rom. iii. 25) and the *ἀφεσεις ἁμαρτιῶν*. The first, the *pretermis*sion of sins through the forbearance of God, they said was what the Son obtained for men till He had actually come in the flesh, and then ensued the *ἀφες*ις, or entire remission, the last going along with the gift of regeneration, which is exclusively the prerogative of the New Covenant.

† As Augustine (*Serm* cx. 1): Qui intercedit colonus est omnis sanctus, qui intra Ecclesiam orat pro iis qui sunt extra Ecclesiam.

## THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

not with the intention that they may continue unpunished in their sins, but obtains that their sentence may for a while be suspended, to see if they will turn and repent; and this his pleading is well set out by that of the vine-dresser here, who begs for the barren tree, not that it may be suffered always to stand, even though it continue in barrenness (for on the contrary he consents to its doom, if it thus abide unfruitful, as a doom righteous and good);\* but asks for it one year of grace, to prove if it will do better than in time past: “*If it bear fruit, well:† and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*” During this year he “*will dig about it and dung it:*” that is, he will hollow out the earth from around the stem of the tree, and afterwards fill up the hollow with manure; as one may often see done now to the orange and other fruit trees in the south of Italy.‡ By these appliances is signified that multiplication of the means of grace which, in God’s dealings with men, we may so often observe to find place at the last period of their probation, and just before those means are withdrawn from them for ever. Thus, before the flood, they had Noah, a “preacher of righteousness,”—before the great catastrophes of the Jews, they had among them some of their most eminent prophets, as Jeremiah before the taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans,—and before its final destruction they enjoyed the ministry of Christ and of his Apostles. To this last, no doubt, allusion is here more immediately made; to that larger, richer supply of grace, that freer outpouring of the Spirit, which should follow on the death, and resurrection, and ascension, of the Lord. So Theophylact explains this digging about and manuring the hitherto unfruitful tree: “Though they were not made better by the law and the prophets, nor yielded fruit

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\* With a play on the words, Augustine (*Serm.* cx. 4): *Dilata est securis, noli esse securo*; and elsewhere, *Distulit securim, non dedit securitatem*.

† We have the same suspended sense, with *εἴ*, or some word similar, understood, Luke xxii. 42; and Thucydides, iii. 8.

‡ For a useful spiritual application of the words, see AUGUSTINE, *Serm.* ccliv. and cx. 1: *Sordes cultoris, dolores sunt peccatoris*. Cf. Ambrose, *De Penit.* ii. 1.

or repentance, yet will I water them by my doctrines and passion; it may be, they will then yield fruits of obedience." No doubt if the history of men's lives were written as large as the history of nations and of churches, and if we could thus read the history of those as plainly as of these, we should oftener perceive that what is true of the one is also true of the other: we should mark critical moments in men's lives to which all the future was linked, on which it was made altogether to depend,—times of gracious visitation, which it was of the deepest importance to know, and not to suffer to escape unobserved and unimproved. Such a time of visitation to the Jewish people was the Lord's ministry in the midst of it (Luke xix. 42); then was the digging about and manuring of the tree which had been barren so long. But it abode in its barrenness; its day of grace came therefore to an end; and, as here is threatened, it was inexorably cut down. We may observe, however, that in the parable our Lord does not actually affirm that the tree will certainly continue unfruitful to the last, but suggests the other alternative as possible; "*If it bear fruit, well.*" For thus the door of repentance is left open to all; the free will of man is recognized and respected, and sinners are warned that they are not shut up, except indeed by their own evil will, in unbelief and hardness of heart,\* that it is they only themselves who make inevitable their doom.

\* Rosenmüller (*Alte und Neue Morgenland*, vol. v. p. 187) quotes from an Arabian writer the following receipt for curing a palm-tree of barrenness 'Thou must take a hatchet, and go to the tree with a friend, unto whom thou sayest, I will cut down this tree, for it is unfruitful. He answers, Do not so, this year it will certainly bear fruit. But the other says, It must needs be,—it must be hewn down; and gives the stem of the tree three blows with the back of the hatchet. But the other restrains him, crying, Nay, do it not, thou wilt certainly have fruit from it this year, only have patience with it, and be not overhasty in cutting it down; if it still refuses to bear fruit, then cut it down. Then will the tree that year be certainly fruitful and bear abundantly.' The same story is to be found in RÜCKERT'S *Brahmanische Erzählungen*, so that it would appear widely spread in the East; also in S. DE SACY'S *Chrest. Arabe*, vol. ii. p. 379; and in the collection of tracts *De Re Rusticâ*, entitled *Geoponica*.

## PARABLE XXI.

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### THE GREAT SUPPER.

LUKE xiv. 15-24.

**I**T is not worth while to repeat the arguments which, to me at least, prove beyond the shadow of a doubt, that this parable, and that recorded at Matt. xxii. 1-14, are entirely different, spoken upon different occasions, and with (partially) different aims. On the present occasion the Lord had been invited to eat bread at the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees (ver. 1). Much happened at this meal, which was probably no common meal, but an entertainment prepared with much cost and expense, and at which many, and, it is likely, guests of consideration, were present. This seems probable for many reasons; there were contests among the guests for precedence, or at least a silent, though not unobserved or unrebuked, attempt on the part of some to select for themselves the places of honour and dignity\* (ver. 7). Then again, from the Lord's address to his host, in which He points out to him a more excellent way of hospitality (ver. 12), we conclude that at that feast were present many of his kindred and richer neighbours; such a supposition adds much force to the admonishment. And then further, our Saviour so often borrowed the images of his parables from what was actually at the moment present to Himself and his hearers, that his speaking of a certain man having made a *great* supper, would almost imply this also at which He was now sitting to have been no ordinary, but rather some costly and numerous attended, entertainment.

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\* This snatching at the first places is adduced by Theophrastus (*Char.* 21) as an example of the *μικροφιλοτιμία*. See also BECKER'S *Charikles*, vol. i. p. 427.

The circumstances out of which the parable immediately grew were these:—there sat one at table with the Lord, who, as he listened to the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, could not forbear exclaiming, and certainly in no spirit of mockery, but rather approving and admiring, “*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*” But how, it may be asked, came the Lord’s last words, “*Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just,*” to elicit exactly this observation? what natural connexion, such as the narrative would evidently imply existed, was there between them? When we keep in mind the expectations entertained among the Jews concerning the resurrection of the just, or, which was the same thing, the open setting up of the kingdom of God,—that it would be ushered in by a great and glorious festival,\* of which all the members of that kingdom should be partakers, it is at once easy to perceive how this man’s thoughts,—a man, it might be, with certain favourable dispositions towards the truth, but of a carnal mind like the most of his countrymen,—should have passed on from the resurrection of the just, of which Jesus spake, to the great festival which was to accompany that resurrection, or rather, should have interpreted the Lord’s words, when He spake of the recompense that would then be given to the merciful, as meaning participation in that festival. His exclamation, “*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,*” might be unfolded thus: “Blessed is he that shall share in the recompense whereof thou speakest, in the reward which shall be given at the resurrection of the just.” His words are an earthly way of saying, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” It is likely from the warning conveyed in the parable, which we are told was particularly, though we cannot suppose exclusively, addressed to him, that he spoke these words with a very easy and comfortable assurance that he

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\* See EISENMENGER’S *Entdeckt. Judenthum*, vol. ii. p. 872, seq.—Augustine, warning against a carnal interpretation, exclaims concerning this supper: *Noli parare fauces, sed cor.*



should make one of those that should thus eat bread in the kingdom of God. He, as a Jew, as a member of the elect nation, had been invited to that great feast of God; *that* was all which he paused to consider; not asking himself whether he had truly accepted the call; or whether, on the contrary, he had suffered carnal desires and lusts to hinder him from rightly embracing it; assuredly he had not at all considered whether in the refusal to enter into that higher spiritual life of the Gospel, to which Christ was now inviting him, there was not involved his own ultimate rejection from the heavenly festival.\* For his warning, and for the warning of all like-minded with him, the parable was spoken.

*"A certain man made a great supper, and bade many."* It has been often said, "*a supper*," because, as a supper takes place at evening, so it was in the evening of time, the last hour (1 John ii. 18; 1 Cor. x. 11), that Christ came and invited men to the fulness of Gospel blessings. But this is pressing the word of the original† too far, which is of very wide and fluctuating use: a great feast, and nothing more, is signified. Men's relish is so little, their desire so faint for the things heavenly, that God graciously presents them to them under such inviting and attractive images as this, that if possible they may be stirred up to a more earnest longing after them.‡

\* Augustine (*Serm.* cxii. 5): Quasi in longinqua iste suspirabat, et ipse Panis ante illum discumbebat.

† Δείπνον, which, as is well known, originally,—at least in the time of Homer,—meant the morning, in opposition to the evening meal, and as little indicates the time when the meal was made as does the Latin cœna. Or even granting that δείπνον in the later Greek of the New Testament had come to signify the evening meal, yet still its being the chief and most important meal in the day, was naturally what caused it here to be selected, and not the accidental circumstance of its being celebrated towards evening.

‡ A sermon by Gregory the Great (*Hom.* 36 in *Evangel.*) on this parable begins beautifully thus; Hoc distare inter delicias corporis et cordis solet, quod corporales deliciæ cum non habentur, grave in se desiderium accendunt, cum vero habitæ eduntur, comedentem protinus in fastidium vertunt. At contra spirituales deliciæ, cum non habentur, in fastidio sunt: cum vero habentur, in desiderio; tantoque a comedente amplius esuriuntur, quanto et ab esuriente amplius

The many\* bidden† were the Jews; and the latter parts of the parable oblige us to understand by these "*bidden*," not so much the entire nation, as those who might be taken for the peculiar representatives of the theocracy, the priests and the elders, the scribes and the Pharisees, in opposition to the publicans and sinners, and the more despised portions of the people; for those, as claiming to be zealous for the law, to be following after righteousness, seemed pointed out as the first who should embrace the invitation of Christ. Some will have that when the maker of the feast "*sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready*," these, in needing thus to be reminded that the hour of the festival had arrived, already began to show how slightly they esteemed the invitation. But this is a mistake, such having been, as was already observed, the usual custom; and their contempt of the honour vouchsafed them, with their neglect of their engaged word,—for we must assume they had engaged themselves to come,—is first testified by their excuses for not appearing at the festival. There was, beyond doubt, in the world's history a time, when more than at any other it might be said "*all things are now ready*," a fulness of time,‡

comeduntur. In illis appetitus placet, experientia displicet; in istis appetitus vilis est, et experientia magis placet.

\* It is a question in Plutarch's *Sympos.* iv. 3, Cur in nuptiis *plurimi* ad cœnam vocantur?

† Καλεῖν, like the Latin *vocare*, is the technical word for the inviting to a festival (Matt. xxii. 3; John ii. 2; 1 Cor. x. 27). It is also the word by which St. Paul uses to express that union of an outward word bidding, and an inward Spirit drawing, whereby God seeks to bring men into his kingdom. The answering word in St. John is ἐλκεῖν (vi. 44; xii. 32). They have both their peculiar fitness, in that both express how the power brought to bear on man's will is a moral power, and man a moral being, capable, though called, of not coming, if he chooses,—of resisting the attraction that would draw him, if he will. This attraction or bidding, outward by the Word, inward by the Spirit, is the κλήσις ἀγία (2 Tim. i. 9), κλήσις τοῦ Θεοῦ (Rom. xi. 29), κλήσις ἐπουράνιος (Heb. iii. 1), ἡ ἄνω κλήσις (Phil. iii. 14),—which last is not the calling to a height, but the calling from a height; not, as we have it, "the *high* calling," but the "calling *from on high*."

‡ Theophylact has here a remarkable comparison; he has remarked the height to which the wickedness of the world had reached at the

at the arrival of which, and not till then, the kingdom of heaven was set up, and men invited, the Jew first, and afterwards the Gentile, to enter into that kingdom (Gal. iv. 1-4). The servant sent out to bid the guests is not, as Theophylact assumes, the great "Apostle and High Priest of our profession" Himself, who "took the form of a servant," and might therefore be aptly represented under this name. Nor yet can we include under this single servant the prophets of the old covenant, for it is not till "*all things are now ready*" that he is sent forth. He represents not the heralds who went before the King, but those who accompanied Him, preachers, Evangelists, and Apostles, all who, reminding the Jews of the prophecies that went before concerning the coming kingdom of God and their share in that kingdom,\* bade them now enter on the enjoyment of those good things, which were no longer good things in the distance, but now actually present.

"*And they all with one consent*"† (or, out of one mind or spirit,) "*began to make excuse.*"‡ Whether there is any essential difference between the excuse which the first guest offers, and that offered by the second, whether by these are represented hindrances different in their nature and character which keep back different men from Christ, or that both would alike teach us the same general lesson, that the love of the world takes away from men a desire after and a relish for heavenly things, it is not easy to determine. I should ima-

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time of the Saviour's coming, and goes on: "Ὡςπερ γὰρ νόσημα ὑποῦλον καὶ κακότηες ἰῶσιν οἱ ἱατροὶ πάντα τὸν πονηρον χυμὸν ἐκρῆξαι, εἰθ' οὕτως τὰς φαρμακείας ἐπάγουσιν, οὕτως καὶ τὴν ἁμαρτιαν ἔδει πάντα τὰ οικεῖα ἐαυτῆς εἶδη ἐπιδείξασθαι, εἰτα τὸν μέγαν ἱατρὸν ἐπιθεῖναι τὸ φάρμακον.

\* Augustine: Qui sunt invitati, nisi per præmissos vocati prophetas?

† Γνώμης, καρδίας, or some similar word, must be supplied; and such, as marking the oneness of spirit out of which all the refusals proceeded, would, I think, be better than *φωνῆς*, which some propose.

‡ Παραιεῖσθαι is used for recusare and excusare; for the first, Acts xxv. 11; for the second at ver. 19 of this parable, where ἔχε με παρητημένον is rather a Latin phrase (habeas me excusatum) than a Greek. Ἐπαινεῖν τὴν κλῆσιν would be the more classic phrase for declining an invitation.

gine there was a difference, as I have already incidentally suggested in speaking of the cognate parable in St. Matthew. Perhaps the first, who pleaded, "*I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it,*" represents those who are elate of heart through already acquired possessions. He is going to see his ground, not exactly in the spirit of Ahab, when he visited the vineyard which he had acquired by wrong (1 Kin. xxi. 15, 16); for there lies no guilt in the thing itself which he is doing; and it makes much for the earnestness of the warning conveyed in the parable, that no such is attributed to any of the guests, that none are kept away by any occupation in itself sinful, while yet all become sinful, because they are allowed to interfere with higher objects, because the first place, instead of a place merely subordinate, is given to them. But he is going to see his possession that he may glory in it, as Nebuchadnezzar gloried when he walked in his palace and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built . . . by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. iv. 30). While in him then it is "the lust of the eye and the pride of life" which are indicated as the things keeping him from Christ, with the second guest it is rather the care and anxiety of business which fill his soul; he has made an important purchase, and cannot put off for a single day the trial of how it is likely to turn out;\* "*I have bought five† yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.*" He is one who is getting what the other has already got.

If in these two it is the pride and the business, in the last

\* So Augustine (*Serm. cxii. 2*): In villâ emptâ, dominatio notatur; ergo superbia castigatur, . . . vitium malum, vitium primum. His mystical explanation of the things which kept away the second guest is less satisfactory, but this is as true as beautiful: Amor rerum terrenarum, viscum est spiritualium pennarum. Ecce concupisti, hæsisisti. Quis tibi dabit pennas, ut columbæ, quando volabis ubi vere requiescas, quando hic ubi male hæsisisti, perverse requiescere voluisti? Cf. *Enarr. in Ps. cxxxviii. 10.*

† The number need not perplex us, as Elijah (1 Kin. xix. 19) found Elisha ploughing with *twelve* yoke of oxen. As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke would be nearly useless, the trial of the oxen was very needful, and was probably to find place before the purchase was finally concluded.

it is the pleasure, of the world that keeps him from Christ. "See you not that I have a feast of my own? why trouble me then with yours? *I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*"\* According to the Levitical law, this reason of his would have been a sufficient one why he should not have gone to the battle (Deut. xxiv. 5); but it is none why he should not come to the feast.† Yet he is quite satisfied with it. The other two, even while they plead their excuses, are themselves conscious that they are hardly valid, so that they add out of a sense of this their insufficiency, "*I pray thee have me excused:*" but this one accounts that he has a reason perfectly good why *he* should not attend, and therefore troubles not himself to make a courteous denial, but refuses outright to appear.‡ As there was an ascending scale of contumacy in the bearing of the guests in the other parable (Matt. xxii.), some making light of the message, others killing the messengers, so is it here. It is true that in none does the evil grow to such an enormous height as there, yet still is there the same ascending scale. The first would be very glad to come, if only it were possible, if there were not a constraining necessity keeping him away. It is a needs be, so at least he describes it, so he would have it no doubt represented to the maker of the feast. The second alleges no such constraining necessity, but is simply going upon sufficient reason in another direction; yet he too at the same time prays to be excused. The third has plans of his own, and declares outright "*I cannot come.*"

In what remarkable connexion do their excuses stand to

\* On the same grounds Cræsus would excuse his son from the great hunting party (Herodotus, i. 36): Νέογαμός τε γάρ ἐστι, καὶ ταῦτά οἱ νῦν μέλει.

† Gerhard gives well the three hindrances in three words, Dignitates, opes, voluptates; and in the rhymes of Hildebert there is evidently an interpretation of them intended, something similar to that given above:

Villa, boves, uxor, cœnam clausere vocatis;

Mundus, cura, caro cœlum clausere renatis.

‡ Bengel: Hic excusator, quo speciosiore et honestiorem videtur habere causam, eo est ceteris importunior.

the declaration of the Saviour which presently follows: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;"\* and how apt a commentary on the parable is supplied by the words of St. Paul, "This I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it" (1 Cor. vii. 29-31), since it was not the having,—for they had nothing which it was not lawful for men to have,—but the unduly loving these things, which proved their hindrance, and ultimately excluded them from the feast.

The servant returns and declares to his lord the ill success which he has met,—how *all* have excused themselves from coming,—even as hitherto it is probable that in no single instance had any one of the spiritual chiefs of the Jewish nation attached himself openly and without reserve to Christ, so that they could say with truth, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (John vii. 48). "*Then† the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.*" There lies in these words a distinct remembrance of the precept which Christ just before had given to him at whose table He was sitting; "Call thou the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" (ver. 13). He encourages him to this by showing him that it is even thus with the great Giver of the heavenly feast. *He* calls to his table the spiritually sick, the spiritually

\* Of all the excuses made by the invited guests, Bengel well says. His omnibus mederi poterat sanctum illud odium, ver. 26; as he beautifully remarks that there is another buying of a field (Matt. xiii. 44), another setting of the hand to the plough (Luke ix. 62), the participating in another wedding (2 Cor. xi. 2), which would not have hindered the accepting of this invitation, since rather each of them would have been identical with it.

† Ambrose: Post divitum resupina fastidia.

needy ; while the rich in their own virtues, in their own merits, at once exclude themselves and are excluded by Him from thence. The people who knew not the law, and whom the Pharisees accounted cursed, the despised and outcasts of the nation, the publicans and sinners, they should enter into the kingdom of God, before the great, the wise, the proud,—before those who said they saw,—before those who thanked God they were not as other men,—before those who counted ~~that~~ they had need of nothing.

Hitherto the parable has been historic ; henceforth it is prophetic, for it declares how God had a larger purpose of grace than could be satisfied by the coming in of a part and remnant of the Jewish people,—that He had prepared a feast, at which more should sit down than they,—that He had founded a Church, in which there would be room for Gentile as well as Jew,—that those too should be “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” It is not that this is explicitly declared in the parable, for the time was not yet for unfolding plainly so great a mystery ; but it lay wrapt up therein, and, like so much else in Scripture, biding its time. The servant, returning from the accomplishing of his second mission, had said, “*Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room,*”—whereupon, since grace will endure a vacuum as little as nature,\* he receives a new commission, “*Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*” If those in the streets and the lanes of *the city* were the more abject among the Jews, the meaner, the more ignorant, the more deeply sunken in sin ; then those without the city,—which city will here be the symbol of the theocracy,—those in the country round, those wandering in the highways and camping, as gipsies now-a-days, under the hedges,† will be the yet more despised and yet more morally abject Gentiles, the *pagans* in all senses of the word.

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\* Bengel : Nec natura nec gratia patitur vacuum.

† Bengel : Sepes, mendicorum parietes.

In respect of these an injunction is given, "*Compel them\* to come in.*" It is strange how any argument for a compulsion, save indeed a moral one, should ever have been here drawn from these words. For in the first place, in the groundwork of the parable, which must not in its own structure be contradictory or absurd, to suppose any other compulsion save that of earnest persuasion is idle; for how can we imagine this single servant, for he is but one throughout, driving before him, and that from the country into the city, a flock of unwilling guests, and these too gathered from those rude and lawless men unto whom he is now sent? The words imply, not that the giver of the feast assumed there would be on their parts any reluctance to accept the invitation, or even any indifference toward it, which should need to be overcome, but exactly the contrary. It was rather that these houseless dwellers in the highways and by the hedges would hold themselves so unworthy of the invitation, as hardly to believe it was intended for them; they would scarcely be induced,—and not without earnest persuasion, and the application of something almost like force,—to enter the rich man's dwelling, and share in his magnificent entertainment. And when we pass on to the spiritual thing signified, since faith cannot be compelled, what can this compelling of men to come in mean,\* save that strong earnest exhortation, which the ambassadors of Christ will address to their brethren, when they are themselves deeply convinced of the importance of the message which they bear, of the mighty issues which are for every man linked with his acceptance or rejection of it? If they "*compel*," it will be as did the angels, who, when Lot lingered, laid hold upon his

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\* Even Maldonatus explains it thus: Sinners, he says, are to be so entreated, ut quodammodo compelli videantur; and Bengel says excellently: Non est omnimoda coactio . . . Aliter compulit Saulus pro Judaismo insaniens, aliter Paulus servus Jesu Christi. On the other hand this phrase is adduced by Augustine to justify a certain degree of constraint for the bringing of men into the outward unity of the Church, *Ep.* 50, and *Serm.* cxii. 7: Foris invenitur necessitas, nascitur intus voluntas. Cf. *De Unit. Eagles.* xx.; and BERNARD, *De Grat. et Lib. Arb.* xi.



hand and brought him forth, and set him forcibly beyond the limits of the doomed city (Gen. xix. 16);\* or the ambassadors of Christ will, in another way, compel men to come in, for they will speak as delivering the words of Him who has a right to be heard by his creatures,—who not merely entreats, but commands, all men everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel. Anselm observes, that God may be also said to compel men to come in, when He drives them by strong calamities to seek and find refuge with Him and in his Church;† or, as Luther explains it, they are compelled to come in when the law is broadly preached, terrifying their consciences, and driving them to Christ, as their only refuge and hope.

The parable closes with the householder's indignant declaration, "*For I say unto you,‡ that none of those men§ that were bidden shall taste of my supper.*" Final exclusion from the feast, to which, when they saw others partaking, they might wish to regain admission on the plea of their former invitation,—this is the penalty with which He threatens them; He declares them to have forfeited their share in it, and for ever; no after earnestness in claiming admission shall profit them now (Prov. i. 28; Matt. xxv. 11, 12).

It is worth while to compare this parable and that of the

\* Buonaventura : Comminatione scilicet æternorum suppliciorum, et ostensione præsentium.

† So, too, Gregory the Great (*Hom. 36 in Evang.*) : Qui ergo hujus mundi adversitatibus fracti ad Dei amorem redeunt, compelluntur ut intrent

‡ The plural *ὑμῖν* is perplexing, only one servant having been named throughout. Is it that that one is considered as the representative of many? Or that this declaration is made in the presence of the whole household? so Grotius : Puto continuari fabulam, et verba esse domini servos alloquentis, et testantis nunquam se posthac illos recusatores ad cenam suam admissurum;—or, as Bengel explains it, of such guests as were already by the first vocation assembled (plurale pertinet ad introductos pauperes). It can scarcely be that Christ is now speaking in his own person to the Pharisees round Him, for the words must plainly be regarded not as his, but as spoken by the householder.

§ It is worth while observing that it is *ἀνδρῶν*, not *ἀνθρώπων*, here, which of itself brings this verse into interesting relation, as indeed the whole parable suggests the parallel, with 1 Cor. i. 26-29.

Marriage of the King's Son, for the purpose of observing with how fine a skill all the minor circumstances are arranged in each, to be in perfectly consistent keeping. The master of the house here does not assume, as he does not possess, power to avenge the affront which is offered to him; even as the offence committed is both much lighter in itself, and lighter in the person against whom it is committed, than the offence which is so severely punished in the parallel narration. There the principal person, being a king, has armies at his command, as he has also whole bands of servants, and not merely a single one, to send forth with his commands. The refusal to accept *his* invitation, was, in fact, according to Eastern notions of submission, nothing less than rebellion, and being accompanied with outrages done to his servants, called out that terrible retribution. Here, as the offence is in every way lighter, so also is the penalty, that is, in the outward circumstance which supplies the groundwork of the parable, being merely exclusion from a festival; though we must not forget that it is not lighter, when taken in its spiritual signification; for it is nothing less than exclusion from the kingdom of God, and from all the blessings of the communion of Christ, and that exclusion implies "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power."

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## PARABLE XXII.

### THE LOST SHEEP.

MATTHEW xviii. 12-14; LUKE xv. 3-7

THE words of St. Luke, "*Then drew near to the Lord all the publicans and sinners for to hear him,*" must not be taken to imply that *all* of these who were at some particular moment in a certain neighbourhood drew near with this purpose; the Evangelist is rather giving the prevailing feature of the whole of Christ's ministry, or at least of one epoch of it,—that it was such a ministry as gathered all the outcasts of the nation, the rejected of the Scribes and Pharisees, round Him—that there was a secret attraction in Him and in his Word, which drew these habitually to Him.\* Of these "*publicans and sinners,*" the first were men infamous among their countrymen by their very occupation;† the second, such as till

\* We find this indicated in the words, ἦσαν ἐγγιζόντες, which here take the place of the simpler imperfect: "They were in the habit of drawing nigh." Grotius rightly: Actum continuum et quotidianum genus hoc loquendi significat: and he compares Luke iv. 31, to which he might have added Mark ii. 18, and other examples.

† Τελῶναι (ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλος ὠνεῖσθαι) were of two kinds. The *publicani*, so called while they were gatherers of the *publicum*, or state revenue; these were commonly Roman knights, who farmed the taxes in companies, and this occupation was not in disesteem, but the contrary. Besides these were the *portitores*, or *exactores*, who are here meant by *τελῶναι*, men of an inferior sort, freedmen, provincials, and the like, who did the lower work of the collection, and probably greatly abused the power which of necessity was left in their hands. They were commonly stationed at frontiers, at gates of cities, on rivers, at havens (véndentium ipsius cœli et terræ et maris transitus: Tertullian), for the purpose of collecting customs on the wares which were brought into the country. They were sufficiently hateful among the Greeks on account of their rudeness, their frauds, their vexations, and oppressions; as they are here classed with ἀμαρτωλοί, so by them with πειχοί and πορνοβασκοί, and whole lists are given of the opprobrious epithets with which they were assailed. Cicero (*In*

awakened by Him to repentance and a sense of their past sins, had been notorious transgressors of God's holy law. Yet He did not repel them, nor seem to fear, as the Pharisees would have done, pollution from their touch; but being come "to seek and to save that which was lost," received them graciously, instructed them further in his doctrine, and lived in familiar intercourse with them. At this the scribes and Pharisees murmured and took offence.\* They could more easily have understood a John Baptist, fleeing to the wilderness, separating himself outwardly from sinners in the whole manner of his life, as well as inwardly in his spirit. And this outward separation from sinners, which was the Old-Testament form of righteousness, may have been needful for those who would preserve their purity in those times of the law; and till the Lord came, who, first in his own person, and then through his Church, brought a far mightier power of good to bear upon the evil of the world than ever had been brought before. It had hitherto been the wisdom of those who felt themselves predisposed to the infection to flee from the infected; but He was the physician who boldly sought out these infected, that

*Vatin. 5*) gives a lively picture of their doings, telling Vatinus he must have thought himself one of these publicans, cum omnium domos, apothecas, naves, facissimè scrutarerè, hominesque negotia gerentes judicis iniquissimis iretibus, mercatores e navi egredientes teneres, conscendentes morarere. Chrysostom (*De Pœnit. Hom. ii. 4*): Οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶ τελώνης ἢ πεπαρρησιασμένη βία, ἐννομος ἀμαρτία, εὐπρόσωπος πλεονεξία. But the Jewish publicans were more hateful still to their countrymen, as traitors to the cause of the nation and of God, who for the sake of filthy lucre had sided with the Romans, the enemies and oppressors of the theocracy, and now collected for a heathen treasury that tribute, the payment of which was the evident sign of the subjection of the people of God to a foreign yoke. Of the abhorrence in which they were held there is abundant testimony; no alms might be received from their money-chest, nay, it was not even lawful to change money there; their evidence was not received in courts of justice; they were put on the same level with heathens (to keep which in mind, adds an emphasis to Luke xix. 9); and no doubt, as renegades and traitors, were far more abhorred even than the heathen themselves (see the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. Publicani, p. 806, and DEYLING'S *Obs. Sac.* vol. i. p. 206).

\* Gregory the Great (*Hom. 34 in Evang.*): Arenti corde ipsam Fontem misericordiæ reprehendebant.

He might heal them ; and having furnished his servants with divine antidotes against the world's sickness, sent them also boldly to encounter and overcome it. This the Pharisees and scribes could not understand ; this, that any one should walk pure and unspotted amid the pollutions of the world, seeking, and not shunning sinners. They had neither love to hope the recovery of such, nor medicines to effect that recovery.

An earlier expression of their discontent (Luke v. 30) had called out those blessed words, "Those that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick ; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ;" and now their later murmurings are the occasion of the three parables which follow, in all which Christ seeks to shame the murmurers, showing them how little sympathy their murmurs found in that higher heavenly world from whence He came. He holds up to them the angels of God, and God Himself, rejoicing at the conversion of a sinner, and silently contrasts this liberal joy and exultation of heaven with the narrow discontent and envious repinings that found place in their hearts on earth. The holy inhabitants of heaven scorned not the repentant sinner, but welcomed him into their fellowship with gladness. Would *they* dare, in the pride of their legal righteousness, and of their exemption from some gross offences whereof he had been guilty, to refuse to receive him ? would they keep him aloof, as though his very touch were defilement ?

Nor is this all ; it is not merely that there is joy in heaven over the penitent sinner, but the Lord warns them, if they continue in this present spirit and temper of theirs, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one of these penitents whom they so much despised, than over ninety-nine such as themselves. He does not deny the good that might be in them ; many of them, no doubt, had a zeal for God, were following after righteousness such as they knew it, a righteousness according to the law. But if now that a higher righteousness was brought into the world,—a righteousness by faith, the new life of the Gospel,—they obstinately refused to become partakers of this new life, preferring to serve in the oldness of

the letter rather than in the newness of the Spirit, then such as would receive this life from Him, however they might, in times past, have departed infinitely wider from God than they had ever done, yet would now be brought infinitely nearer to Him; as the one sheep was brought home *to the house*, while the ninety and nine abode in the wilderness; as for the prodigal a fatted calf was slain, while the elder brother received not so much as a kid. Nay, in the last parable they are bidden to beware lest the spirit which they are now indulging in should exclude them altogether,—or rather, lest they through it should exclude themselves,—from that new kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which the Lord was establishing upon earth, and into which they, as well as the publicans and sinners, were invited freely to enter.

Of the three parables, the two first, the Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Money, set forth to us mainly the *seeking* love of God; while the third, that of the Prodigal Son, describes to us rather the rise and growth, responsive to that love, of repentance in the heart of man. It is, in fact, only the same truth presented successively under different aspects,—God's seeking love being set forth first, and with good reason, since we thus are taught that all first motions towards good are from Him, that grace must *prevent* as well as follow us. But yet is it the same truth in all; for it is the confluence of this drawing and seeking love from without, and of the faith awakened by the same power from within,—the confluence of these two streams, the objective grace and the subjective faith, out of which repentance springs. And thus the parables, incomplete without one another, together form a perfect and harmonious whole. Separately they would have seemed incomplete, for the first two speak nothing of a changed heart and mind toward God; nor, indeed, would the images of a wandering sheep and a lost piece of money have conveniently allowed this; while the last speaks only of this change, and nothing of that which must have caused it, the antecedent working of the Spirit of God in the heart, the

going forth of his power and love, which must have found the wanderer, before he could ever have found himself, or found his God. We may thus contemplate these parables as a trilogy, which again is divided into two and one; St. Luke himself distinctly marking the break and the new beginning which finds place after the first two.

But there are also many other inner harmonies and relations between them, which are interesting to observe and trace. Thus there is a seeming anti-climax in the numbers named in the successive parables,—one in a hundred,\*—one in ten,—one in two; which is in reality a climax, as the sense of the value of the part lost would naturally increase with the proportion which it bore to the whole. And other human feelings and interests are implied in the successive narratives, which must have helped to enhance in each successive case the anxiety for the recovery of what was lost. The possessor of a hundred sheep must have been in some sort a rich man, therefore not likely to feel the loss of a single one out of his flock so deeply as the woman who, having but ten small pieces of money, should of these lose one: again, the intensity of her feeling would come infinitely short of the parental affection of a father, who, having but two sons, should behold one out of these two go astray. Thus we find ourselves moving in ever narrower, and so ever intenser, circles of hope and fear and love, drawing in each successive parable nearer to the innermost centre and heart of the truth.

In each case too we may see shadowed forth on the sinner's part a greater guilt, and thus on God's part a greater grace. In the first parable the guilt implied is the smallest. The sinner is set forth under the image of a silly wandering sheep. Though this is but one side of the truth, yet is it a most real

\* This was a familiar way of numbering and dividing among the Jews, of which examples are given by Lightfoot here. There is also a striking saying attributed to Mahomet, in which the same appears. The Lord God has divided mercy and pity into a hundred parts; of these, He has retained ninety and nine for Himself, and sent one upon earth (VON HAMMER'S *Fundgruben d. Orients*, vol. i. p. 308).

one, that sin is oftentimes an ignorance; nay in a greater or less degree is always such (Luke xxiii. 34; Acts iii. 17; 1 Tim. i. 13); the sinner knows not what he does, and if in one aspect he deserves wrath, in another claims pity: he is a sheep that has gone astray, ere it knew what it was doing, ere it had even learned that it *had* a shepherd, that it belonged to a fold. So is it with a multitude of wanderers, in whom all this knowledge was yet latent, and who went astray before ever it was effectually called out. But there are others, set forth under the lost money, who having known themselves to be God's, to be stamped with his image, the image of the Great King, on their souls, do yet throw themselves away, renounce their high birth, and wilfully lose themselves in the world. *Their* sin is greater; but there is a sin yet greater than theirs behind,—the sin of the prodigal: to have known something of the love of God—to have known something of Him, not as our King who has stamped us with his image, but as our Father in whose house we are; and yet to have slighted that love, and forsaken that house—this is the crowning guilt; and yet the grace of God is sufficient to forgive even this sin,\* and to bring back such a wanderer even as this to Himself.

The first parable of the series had a peculiar fitness as addressed to the spiritual rulers of the Jewish people. They too were shepherds—continually charged, rebuked, warned, under this very title (Ezek. xxxiv.; Zech. xi. 16); under-shepherds of Him who set forth his own watchful tenderness for his people under the same image (Isai. xl. 11; Jer. xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 12; xxxvii. 24; Zech. xiii. 7; cf. Ps. xxiii. 1; lxxx. 1);—yet now were they finding fault with Christ for doing that very thing which they ought, and which the name they bore should have reminded them they ought, to have done. Not only were they themselves no seekers of the lost,†

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\* Bengel: Ovis, drachma, filius perditus: peccator stupidus, sui plane nescius, sciens et voluntarius.

† One of the charges against the false shepherds, Ezek. xxxiv. 4, is just this, τὸ ἀπολωλὸς οὐκ ἐζητήσατε.



no bringers back of the strayed, but they murmured against Him, "the Shepherd of Israel," the "great Shepherd of the sheep," because He came doing in his own person what they his deputies so long had neglected to do, because He came to make good what they had marred.

In the order of things natural, a sheep which could wander away from, could also wander back to, the fold. But it is not so with a sheep of God's pasture: this can lose, but it cannot find itself again; there is in sin a *centrifugal* tendency, and of necessity the wanderings of this wanderer could only be further and further away. Therefore, if it shall be found at all, this can only be by its Shepherd's going to seek it; without this, being once lost, it must be lost for ever.\* It might at first sight appear as though the shepherd were caring for the one strayed, at the expense and risk of all the others, leaving as he does the other "*ninety and nine in the wilderness.*" But it need hardly be observed, that we are not to understand of "*the wilderness,*" as of a sandy or rocky desert, without herbage, the haunt of wild beasts or of wandering robber hordes; but rather as wide-extended grassy plains, steppes or savannahs, called desert because without habitations of men, but exactly the fittest place for the pasture of sheep. Thus we read in St. John (vi. 10) that "there was much grass" in a place which in another Evangelist is called a desert place (Matt. xiv. 15); and no doubt we commonly attach to "desert" or "wilderness" in Scripture, images of far more uniform barrenness and

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\* Augustine presses this point, observing how, though nothing is said of the father either sending by the hand of another or himself looking for the prodigal son, yet we are not therefore to see in his return, in his "*I will arise,*" an independent resolution of the sinner's own, but rather to complete that parable from this (*Enarr. in Ps. lxxvii. 19*): *Redit ovis perdita, non tamen in viribus suis, sed in humeris reportata pastoris, quæ se perdere potuit, dum sponte vagaretur, se autem invenire non potuit, nec omnino inveniretur, nisi pastoris misericordiâ quæreretur.* Non enim et ille filius ad hanc ovem non pertinet, qui reversus in semetipsum dixit, *Surgam, et ibo ad patrem meum.* Occultâ itaque vocatione et inspiratione etiam ipse quæsitus est et resuscitatus, nonnisi ab illo qui vivificat omnia; et inventus, a quo, nisi ab illo qui perrexit salvare et quærere quod perierat?

desolation and dreariness than the reality would warrant. Parts, it is true, of the larger deserts of Palestine or Arabia are as dreary and desolate as can be imagined, though quite as much from rock as from sandy levels; yet we learn from travellers, that, on the whole, there is in those deserts or wildernesses much greater variety of scenery, much more to refresh the eye, much larger extents of fertile or at least grassy land, than is commonly supposed;\*—so that the residue of the flock are left here in their ordinary pasturage, while the shepherd goes after that one which is lost till he finds it.

The Incarnation of the Son of God was a girding of Himself to go after his lost sheep. His whole life upon earth, his entire walk in the flesh, was a following of the strayed one; for this was the very purpose of his coming, namely, “to seek and to save that which was lost.” And He was not weary with the greatness of the way; He shrank not when the thorns wounded his flesh and tore his feet. He followed us into the deep of our misery, came under the extremity of our malediction. For He had gone forth to seek his own “*till he had found it,*” and would not give over his labour until then. And having found, how tenderly does the shepherd of the parable handle that sheep which has cost him all this labour and fatigue: he does not punish it; he does not smite, nor even harshly *drive* it back to the fold; nay, he does not deliver it to a servant, but he lays it upon his own† shoulders, and him-

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\* This is the admirable description of a late traveller in the East: “Stern and monotonous as may be called the general features of a desert, let not the reader suppose it is all barren. There are indeed some accursed patches, where scores of miles lie before you, like a tawny Atlantic, one yellow wave rising before another. But far from unfrequently there are regions of wild fertility, where the earth shoots forth a jungle of aromatic shrubs, and most delicious are the sensations conveyed to the parched European, as the camel treads down the underwood with his broad foot, and scatters to the winds the exhalations of a thousand herbs. There are other districts, where the hard and compact gravel would do honour to a lady’s shrubbery: in these regions you meet with dwarf trees, and long ridges of low bare rocks, of fantastic configuration, along whose base you find the yellow partridge and the black-eyed gazelle.”

† Ἐπὶ τοὺς ὤμους ἑαυτοῦ.

self carefully carries it, till he brings it to the fold. In this last circumstance we recognize an image of the sustaining and supporting grace of Christ, which does not cease, till his rescued are made partakers of final salvation. But when some press and make much of the weariness which this load must have caused to the shepherd, seeing here an allusion to his sufferings, "who bare our sins in his own body,"\* upon whom was laid the iniquity of us all, this seems to me a missing here of the true significance. For rather the words "*till he find it*," I should take as having told the whole story of the painfulness of his way, who came in search of his lost creature, a way which led Him to the cross and to the grave: and this is now the story rather of his triumphant return† to heaven with the trophies that He had won, the spoil that He had delivered from the jaws of the lion.‡

And as the man when he reaches home summons friends

\* Cajetan: *Impositio ovis in humeros redemptio est humani generis in proprio corpore, et hoc quia sponte fecit, ideo gaudens describitur. Melancthon: Est in textu suavis significatio inserta passionis Christi: ovem inventam ponit in humeros suos, i.e. ipse onus nostrum transfert in se ipsum.*

† Gregory the Great (*Hom. 34 in Ewang.*): *Inventâ ove ad domum redit, quia Pastor noster reparato homine ad regnum cœleste redit. Bengel: Jesus Christus plane in ascensione domum redit; cœlum ejus domus est; Joh. xiv. 2*

‡ The lines of Prudentius (*Hymn. post Jejun.*) have much beauty.

Ille ovem morbo residem gregique  
Perditam sano, male dissipantem  
Vellus affixis vepribus per hirtæ  
Devia silvæ

Impiger pastor revocat, lupisque  
Gestat exclusis, humeros gravatus;  
Inde purgatam revehens aprico  
Reddit ovili,

Reddit et pratis viridique campo,  
Vibrat impexis ubi nulla lappis  
Spina, nec germen sudibus perarmat  
Carduus horrens:

Sed frequens palmis nemus, et reflexa  
Vernat herbarum comâ, tum perennis  
Gurgitem vivis vitreum fluentis  
Laurus obumbrat.

and neighbours to be sharers in his\* joy, as they had been sharers in his anxiety (for he speaks of the sheep as one with whose loss they were acquainted and had sympathized), not otherwise shall joy be in heaven when one sinner repents, one wanderer is brought back to the heavenly fold; for heaven and redeemed earth constitute but one kingdom, being bound together by that love which is "the bond of perfectness." Our Lord refrains from indicating, at least in so many words, who the bringer back shall be; but plainly enough implies that it is no other than Himself who returning to the heavenly places shall cause jubilee there. For we must observe that He speaks of this joy as still in the future, as one which hereafter shall be; and this consistently with the tacit assumption of the good shepherd's part as his own; for not as yet had He risen and ascended, leading "captivity captive," and bringing with Him his rescued and redeemed. Nor should we miss that slight yet majestic intimation of the dignity of his person which He gives in that "*I say unto you*"—"I who know, I who, when I tell you of heavenly things, tell you of mine own, of things which I have seen (John iii. 11),—I say to you that this joy shall be in heaven on the recovery of the lost."

Were this all, there would be nothing to perplex; but it is not merely joy over one penitent which the Lord announces, but *more* joy over this one "*than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*" Now we can easily understand how, *among men*, there should be more joy for a small portion which has been endangered, than for the continued secure possession of a much larger portion; we might say, with Luther, it is the mother concentrating for the moment all her affection on her sick child, and seeming to a bystander to love none but that only, and rejoicing at that one child's recovery more than at the uninterrupted health of all the

\* Gregory the Great (*Hom. 34 in Evang.*) on this "*Rejoice with me.*" Non dicit, Congratulamini *inventæ ovi*, sed *mihi*; quia videlicet ejus gaudium est vita nostra, et cum nos ad cælum reducimur, solemnitatem lætitiæ ejus implemus.

others. Or, to use Augustine's beautiful words,\* "What then takes place in the soul, when it is more delighted at finding or recovering the things it loves, than if it had ever had them? Yea, and other things witness hereunto, and all things are full of witnesses, crying out, 'So it is.' The conquering commander triumpheth; yet had he not conquered, unless he had fought, and the more peril there was in the battle, so much the more joy is there in the triumph. The storm tosses the sailors, threatens shipwreck; all wax pale at approaching death; sky and sea are calmed, and they are exceeding joyed, as having been exceeding afraid. A friend is sick, and his pulse threatens danger; all who long for his recovery are sick in mind with him. He is restored, though as yet he walks not with his former strength, yet there is such joy as was not when before he walked sound and strong."† Yet whence arises the disproportionate joy? Clearly from the unexpectedness of the result, from the temporary uncertainty which existed about it. But no such uncertainty could find place with God, who knows the end from the beginning, whose joy needs not to be provoked and heightened by a fear going before; nor with Him need the earnest love for the perilled one, as in the case of the mother and her children, throw into the background, even for the moment, the love and care for the others: so that the analogies and illustrations drawn from this world of ours supply no adequate solution of the difficulty.

And further, this is difficult, that there should be any "*which need no repentance*," since "*All like sheep have gone astray*;" and therefore all must have need to search and try back their ways; nor do the explanations commonly given quite remove the perplexity.‡ We may indeed get rid both of

\* *Confessions*, iii. 8.

† Thus too Bernard says (*In Cant. Serm.* 29): *Nescio autem quomodo tenerius mihi adstricti sunt qui post increpatoria et per increpatoria tandem convaluerunt de infirmitate, quam qui fortes ab initio permanserunt, non indigentes istiusmodi medicamento*,—words which are the more valuable for the illustration of the text, as spoken with no immediate reference to it.

‡ As for instance that by Grotius: *Quibus non est opus de toto*

this difficulty and the other, by seeing here an example of the Lord's severe yet loving irony. These "*ninety and nine, which need no repentance,*" would then be,—like those whole who need not, or count that they need not, a physician (Matt. ix. 12),—self-righteous persons, as such displeasing to God, and whose present life could naturally cause *no* joy in heaven—so that it would be easy to understand how a sinner's conversion would cause more joy there than the continuance of such in their evil state. But the Lord could hardly have meant to say merely this; and moreover, the whole construction of the parables is against such an explanation: the ninety and nine sheep have *not* wandered, the nine pieces of money have *not* been lost, the elder brother has *not* left his father's house. The one view of the parables which affords a solution of the difficulties appears to be this—that we understand these "*righteous*" as really such, but also that their righteousness is merely legal, is of the old dispensation, so that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than they. The law had done a part of its work for them, keeping them from gross positive transgressions of its enactments, and thus they needed not, like the publicans and sinners, repentance from these; but it had not done another part of its work, it had not brought them, as God intended it should, to a conviction of sin, it had not been for them "a schoolmaster to Christ," and

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vitæ genere migrare; and by Calvin: Nomen pœnitentiæ specialiter ad eorum conversionem restringitur, qui penitus a Deo aversi, quasi a morte in vitam resurgunt. Nam alioqui continua in totam vitam esse debet pœnitentiæ meditatio; nec quisquam ab hac necessitate eximitur, quum singulos sua vitia ad quotidianum profectum sollicitent.—A very curious, but not very fortunate, scheme for getting rid of the difficulty which attends the words "*who need no repentance,*" has been proposed by some. The ninety-nine just signify the whole unfallen creation, the world of angels. "These," says Theophylact, who, however, proposes the interpretation not as his own (*φασὶν τινες*), "the good Shepherd left in the wilderness, that is, in the higher heavenly places, for heaven is this wilderness, being sequestered from all worldly tumult, and fulfilled with all tranquillity and peace," and came to seek the wandering and lost human nature. The interpretation finds more favour with Hilary, *Comm. in Matth.* xviii. 10.

to a glad and thankful embracing of his salvation. The publicans and sinners, though by another path, had come to Him; and He here declares that there was more real ground of joy over one of these,\* who were now entering into the inner sanctuary of faith, than over ninety and nine of themselves, who lingered at the legal vestibule, refusing to go further in.†

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\* Here the illustration of Gregory the Great may fairly be applied: *Dux in prælio plus cum militem dñigit, qui post fugam conversus, fortiter hostem premit, quam illum qui nunquam terga præbuit et nunquam aliquid fortiter gessit.* And Anselm (*Hom.* 12): *Sunt aliqui justi, qui licet justii vivant et ab illicitis se contineant, magna tamen bona nunquam operantur. Et sunt alii qui pius seculariter et criminoso vixerunt, sed postmodum redeuntes ad cor suum, quia se illicite egisse considerant, ex ipso suo dolore compuncti, inardescunt ad amorem Dei, seseque in magnis virtutibus exercent, cuncta etiam difficilia sancti certaminis appetunt, omnia mundi blandimenta derelinquunt; et quia se errasse a Deo conspiciunt, damna præcedentia lucis sequentibus recompensant.* Compare Jeremy Taylor, *Life of Christ*, part iii. § 16, no. 12.

† On no image does the early Church seem to have dwelt with greater delight than this of Christ as the good Shepherd bringing home his lost sheep. Proofs of this are the very many gems, seals, fragments of glass, and other early Christian relics, which have reached us, on which Christ is thus portrayed as bringing back a lost sheep to the fold upon his shoulders. From a passing allusion in Tertullian (*De Pænit.* vii. 10), we learn that it was in his time painted on the chalice of the Holy Communion. Christ appears in the same character of the good Shepherd in bas-reliefs on sarcophagi, and paintings in the catacombs—one of which last is believed to be as early as the third century. Sometimes there are other sheep at his feet, generally two, looking up with apparent pleasure at Him and his burden; in his right hand He most often holds the seven-reeded pipe of Pan, setting forth the attractions of divine love, while with his left He steadies the burden which He is bearing on his shoulders. Sometimes He is sitting down, as weary with the length of the way. And it is observable that this representation always occupies the place of honour, the centre of the vault or tomb. In MÜNTER'S *Sinnbilder der Alt. Christ.* vol. i. pp. 60-65, there are various details on the subject, and many copies of these portraiture, which are interesting specimens of early Christian art. See too BOSIO'S *Rom. Sottterr.* pp. 339, 348, 349, 351, 373, 383, 387, for various delineations of the same, and DIDRON'S *Iconogr. Chrétienne*, p. 346.

## PARABLE XXIII.

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### THE LOST PIECE OF MONEY.

LUKE xv. 8-10.

THE preceding parable cannot but have anticipated much that might have been said upon this; and yet we shall think only too unworthily of our Lord's wisdom as a speaker of parables, if we conclude them to be merely identical. It would be against all analogy of former duplicate parables to presume that these two said merely the same thing, twice over. The Pearl and the Hid Treasure, the Leaven and the Mustard-Seed, at first sight appear the same, the second only to repeat the first; and yet on closer inspection important differences have not failed to reveal themselves in them: and it is not otherwise here. If the shepherd in the last parable was Christ, the woman in this may, perhaps, be the Church;\* or if we say that by the woman is signified the Divine Wisdom,† so often exalted in Proverbs as seeking the salvation of men, and here, as elsewhere (Luke xi. 49), set forth as a person, and not an attribute, this will be no different view. For rather these two explanations will be seen to flow into one, if only we keep in mind how the Church is the organ in and through which the Holy Spirit seeks for the lost, and that only as the Church is quickened and informed by the Divine Spirit, is it stirred up to these active ministries of love for the seeking and saving of souls. That the Church should be personified as a woman is only natural; and the thought of the Holy Ghost as a *mother* has been at different times not far from

\* Ambrose: Qui sunt isti, pater, pastor, mulier? nonne Deus pater, Christus pastor, mulier Ecclesia?

† Gregory the Great (*Hom. 34 in Evang.*): Ipse etenim Deus, ipse et Dei Sapientia.



men's minds.\* Keeping prominently in mind then that it is only the Church, because and in so far as it is dwelt in by the Spirit, which appears as the woman seeking her lost, that only as the Spirit says "Come," the Bride can say it, we shall have in the three parables the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, albeit not in their order, since other respects prevailed to give the parables a different succession. Moreover, any reluctance to accept this interpretation, as though the Church were herein encroaching on the honour and exclusive prerogatives of her Lord, is in this way removed; not to say that if we *do* find in this parable a picture of the Church carrying forward the same work which its Lord had auspicated and commenced, what is this but in agreement with Christ's own words, that it should do the same works that He did and greater—although only because He had ascended to the Father, and Himself carried on by the Spirit *from heaven* the work which in his own person He had begun upon earth?

In the one piece of money,† which the woman loses out of her ten, expositors, both ancient and modern, have delighted to trace a resemblance to the human soul, originally stamped with the image and superscription of the great King‡ ("God created man in his own image," Gen. i. 27), and still retaining traces of the mint from which it proceeded, though by sin the image has been nearly effaced, and the superscription has well

\* See some interesting remarks in Jerome (*Comm. in Esai.* xl. 3, p. 308), explaining and justifying this language; while at the same time he guards with saying: In divinitate nullus est sexus. Christ claims too for Himself the mother's heart in his affecting words, Luke xiii. 34.

† In the original, it is not indefinitely a piece of money, but a drachma, the commonest of Greek coins. Except during a part of the Maccabæan rule, the Jews never coined any money of their own. The Herodian coins, now found in collections, were rather medals struck on particular occasions than money.

‡ Thus Augustine (*Enar. in Ps. cxxxviii.*): Sapientia Dei perdiderat drachmam. Quid est drachma? Numus, in quo numo imago erat ipsius Imperatoris nostri. Compare Ignatius (*Ad Magn.* 5), though he refers not to this parable: Ἐστὶν νομίσματα δύο, ὃ μὲν Θεοῦ, ὃ δὲ κόσμου, καὶ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἰδίον χαρακτῆρα ἐπικείμενον ἔχει, οἱ ἅπιοτοι τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, οἱ δὲ πιστοὶ ἐν ἀγάπῃ χαρακτῆρα Θεοῦ Πατρὸς διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

nigh become illegible.\* But as the woman, having lost her drachm, will “*light a candle and sweep† the house, and seek diligently till she find it;*” even so the Lord, through the ministrations of his Church, gives diligence to recover the lost sinner, to bring back the money of God to his treasury, from which originally it proceeded.‡ The allusion often found in the lighting of the candle or lamp to the mystery of the Incarnation,—the divine glory which the Saviour had within, shining through the fleshly covering which only in part concealed it,§—must of course give way, if we take the parable as is here proposed. Rather it must be explained by the help of such hints as Matt. v. 14, 15; Phil. ii. 15; Ephes. v. 13, supply. The “*candle*” is the word of God; which candle the Church holds forth, as she has and exercises a ministry of the Word. It is by the light of this Word that sinners are found, that they find themselves, that the Church finds them.|| This

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\* It is true that against this view it may be said that the Greek drachma, the coin here particularly named, had not, like the Roman denarius (Mat. xxii. 20), the image and superscription of the emperor upon it, but commonly some image, as of an owl, or tortoise, or head of Pallas.

† The erroneous reading *evertit*, for *everrit*, prevailed in the copies of the Vulgate during the middle ages. It appears as early as Gregory the Great (*Hom.* 34 *in Evang.*), who says: *Domus evertitur, quum consideratione reatus sui humana conscientia perturbatur*. And Thauler's interpretation a good deal turns on that very word: *Deus hominem quærit, domunque ejus penitus evertit, quomodo nos solemus, aliquod requirentes, cuncta evertere et loco suo movere, donec invenire contingat quod quærimus*. So Wiclif: “Turneth up so down the house.”

‡ H. de Sto. Victore: *Drachma reperitur, dum in homine similitudo conditoris reparatur*; and Bernard (*De Grat. et Lib. Arb* 10): *Adhuc hic fœda et deformis jacuisset imago, si non evangelica illa mulier lucernam accenderet, id est, Sapientia in carne appareret, everteret domum, videlicet vitiorum, drachmam suam requireret quam perdiderat: hoc est imaginem suam, quæ nativo spoliata decore, sub pelle peccati sordens tamquam in pulvere latitabat: inventam tergeret, et tolleret de regione dissimilitudinis, pristinamque in speciem reformatam, similem faceret illam in gloriâ sanctorum, immo sibi ipsi per omnia redderet quandoque conformem, cum illud Scripturæ videlicet impleretur: Scimus quia cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus: quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est*

§ Thus Cajetan: *Lucerna accensa mysterium est Incarnationis, Verbum in carne, tanquam lux in testâ.*

|| So Tertullian (*De Pudic.* 7): *Drachmam ad lucernæ lumen repertam, quasi ad Dei verbum.*

candle lighted, she proceeds to "*sweep the house*," the visible Church, which sweeping, as Bengel well remarks, *non fit sine pulvere*. Where this is done in earnest, what a deranging of the house for a time! how does the dust which had been allowed to settle down and to accumulate begin to rise and fly about in every direction; how unwelcome that which is going forward to any that may be in the house, and have no interest in the finding of that which has been lost. The charge against the Gospel is still the same, that it turns the world upside down, even as indeed it does (Acts xvii. 6). For only let that Word be proclaimed, and how much of latent aversion to the truth reveals itself now open enmity; how much of torpid alienation from God is changed into active hostility to Him; what an outcry is there against the troublers of Israel, against the witnesses that torment the dwellers upon earth (Rev. xi. 10). But amid all this, while others are making outcry about the dust and inconvenience, she that bears the candle of the Lord is diligently looking meanwhile for her lost, not ceasing her labour, her care, her diligence, till she has recovered her own again.

We must not omit to remark a difference between this parable and the preceding, which is not accidental. In that the shepherd went to look for his strayed sheep *in the wilderness*; but it is *in the house* that this piece of money is lost, and in the house therefore it is sought again.\* We trace

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\* Origen also presses the fact, that this money was found *within* the house, and not *without* it, though with a different purpose. He is dealing with Gen. xxvi. 18, to which he very fairly gives a deeper and allegorical interpretation, in addition to that lying on the surface, namely this,—that those stopped wells are the fountains of eternal life, which the Philistines, that is, Satan and sin, had choked, but which our Isaac, the son of gladness, opened anew for us. And observing that such wells, though stopped indeed, are within every one of us (compare John iv. 14), he brings into comparison this parable, noting that the lost money was not found *without* the house, but *within* it: for, he would say, at the bottom of every man's soul there is this image of God, mislaid indeed and quite out of sight, overlaid with a thousand other images, covered with dust and defilement, but which still may be found, and, in his hands from whom it first came, may again recover its first brightness, and the sharpness of

then a progress from that parable to this. The earthly house, the visible Church, now first appears. In that other there was the returning of the Son to the heavenly places, but in this there is intimation of a Church which has been founded upon earth, and to which also sinners are restored. And there are other slighter variations between the two parables, explicable at once on the same supposition that we have there the more immediate ministry of Christ, and here the secondary ministry of his Church. The shepherd says, "I have found *my* sheep;" not so the woman, but "I have found *the* coin;" for it is in no sense *hers*, as the sheep was *his*. He says, "which *was* lost;" but she, "which *I* lost," confessing a fault and carelessness of her own, which was the original cause of the loss—even as it must have been; for a sheep strays of itself, but a piece of money could only be lost by a certain negligence on their part who should have kept it.

And now "*she calleth her friends and her neighbours together,*" that they may be sharers in her joy (cf. Ruth iv. 14, 17). They are *female* friends and neighbours, as is only natural, although this nicety in the keeping of the parts of the parable necessarily escapes us in English.\* The fact that they are so need not prevent us from understanding by them the angels,—we have indeed the Lord's warrant for so doing,

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outline which it had at the beginning His words are (*In Gen. Hom. 13*): Mulier illa quæ perdidit drachmam, non illam invenit extrinsecus, sed in domo suâ, posteaquam accendit lucernam, et mundavit domum sordibus et immunditiis, quas longi temporis ignavia et hebetudo congesserat, et ibi invenit drachmam. Et tu ergo, si accendas lucernam, si adhibeas tibi illuminationem Spiritûs Sancti, et in lumine ejus videas lumen, invenies intra te drachmam. Cum enim faceret hominem ex initio Deus, ad imaginem et similitudinem suam fecit eum: et hanc imaginem non extrinsecus, sed intra eum collocavit. Hæc in te videri non poterat, donec domus tua sordida erat, immunditiis et rudæribus repleta. Iste fons scientiæ intra te erat situs, sed non poterat fluere, quia Philistini repleverant eum terrâ, et fecerant in te imaginem terreni. Sed tu portasti quidem tunc imaginem terreni, nunc vero his auditis ab illâ omni mole et oppressione terrenâ per Verbum Dei purgatus, imaginem cœlestis in te splendescere facito.

\* It need not have done so in old English, which possessed the words "friendess" and "neighbouress."

—whose place we may observe is not “in heaven” in this parable, which it was in the last; for this is the rejoicing together of the redeemed and elect creation *upon earth* at the repentance of a sinner. Among the angels who walk up and down the earth, who are present in the congregations of the faithful, offended at aught unseemly among them (1 Cor. xi. 10), joying to behold their order, but most of all joying when a sinner is converted,—among these there shall be joy, when the Church of the redeemed, quickened by the Holy Spirit, summons them to join with it in consenting hymns of thanksgiving to God for the recovery of a lost soul. For indeed if the “sons of God” shouted for joy and sang together at the first creation (Job xxxviii. 7), how much more when “a new creation” has found place, in the birth of a soul into the light of everlasting life (Ephes. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12); for, according to that exquisite word of St. Bernard’s, the tears of penitents are the wine of angels,\* and their conversion, as Luther says, causes *Te Deums* among the heavenly host.

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\* Pœnitentium lacrymæ, vinum Angelorum; and with allusion to this parable the Christian poet sings:

Amisssa drachma regio  
Recondita est arario;  
Et gemma, deterso luto,  
Nitore vincit sidera.

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## PARABLE XXIV.

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### THE PRODIGAL SON.

LUKE XV. 11-32.

WE proceed to consider a parable which, if it be permitted to compare things divine one with another, we might call the pearl and crown of all the parables of Scripture;\* as again, it is the most *elaborate*, if we may use a word, which has a certain unfitness when applied to the spontaneous and the free, but which yet the completeness of all the minor details seems to suggest;—one too containing within itself such a circle of doctrine as abundantly to justify the title *Evangelium in Evangelio*, which has been sometimes given it. “*A certain man had two sons.*” In regard of the great primary application of this parable, there have always been two different views in the Church. There are those who have seen in its two sons the Jew and Gentile, and in the younger son’s departure from his father’s house, the history of the great apostasy of the Gentile world; in his return its reception into the privileges of the new covenant;—as in the elder brother a lively type of the narrow-hearted self-extolling Jews, who grudged that the “sinners of the Gentiles” should be admitted to the same blessings as themselves, and who on this account would not themselves “*go in.*” Others behold rather in the younger son a pattern of all those who, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether in that old dispensation which was then drawing to an end, or brought up in the bosom of the Christian Church, have widely departed from God, and after having tasted the misery which follows upon all departure

\* Grotius: Inter omnes Christi parabolas, hæc sane eximia est, plena affectuum, et pulcherrimis pietæ coloribus

from Him, have by his grace been brought back to Him, as to the one source of blessedness and life;—while they in the elder brother have seen either a narrow form of real righteousness,—or, seeing in his words (ver. 29) only his own account of himself, of pharisaical self-righteousness, one righteous in his own sight, not in the Lord's.

The maintainers of this last explanation object to the other, which makes the two sons to represent the Jew and Gentile (and the objection appears decisive), that such an interpretation is alien to the scope of the parable; which was spoken in reply to the murmurings of some (ver. 1, 2), who were offended that Jesus received and consorted with publicans and sinners. Except by way of remote inference, how could God's acceptance of the Gentiles to his grace justify the Lord in holding this free communion with the fallen members of the Jewish Church? Before that interpretation can have any claim to stand, it must be shown that these "*publicans and sinners*" were Gentiles, and not Jews. But there is abundant evidence, scriptural and other, that of the publicans in Judæa, if not all, yet far the most were of Jewish birth. Zacchæus was "a son of Abraham" (Luke xix. 9), and Levi, who sat at the receipt of custom (Luke v. 27), the same, for the Church has always seen in him the Apostle St. Matthew; and publicans were among those who came to the baptism of John (Luke vii. 29).<sup>\*</sup> They were indeed placed by their fellow-countrymen on a level with heathens; and some heathen publicans even within the limits of Judæa there may have been; but doubtless these whom Jesus "received," and with whom He lived, were of the stock of Abraham; for with none other, except by way of exception (John xii. 20-22),<sup>†</sup> did He

<sup>\*</sup> See also LIGHTFOOT, *Hor. Heb.* on Matt. v. 46.

<sup>†</sup> Many of these arguments in proof that the publicans of the New Testament were Jews, are adduced by Jerome (*Ep.* 21, *ad Damasum*), who marvels at the audacity of Tertullian's assertion that they were always heathen. The great aim of the latter in his treatise *De Pudicitia*, 7-9 (written after he had forsaken the Catholic Church), is, by proving this, to prove also as a consequence that no warrant can be drawn from this Scripture for receiving back into Church communion

familiarly converse in the days of his flesh ; being “ not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

These “*publicans and sinners*” then were Jews ; scorned outcasts indeed of the nation ; and, till the words of Christ had awakened in them a nobler life, no doubt deserving all or nearly all the scorn which they found. We have not here the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles into the covenant ; of that during his earthly life He gave only a few hints even to his own disciples ; but the blessed truth that, within the covenant, He was come to call and to receive sinners to repentance. At the same time the interpretation which must be rejected as the primary, may still be regarded as not altogether excluded. Everywhere in fact the parable has found, or is finding, its interpretation. First in the relation of the Pharisees and other “*righteous*” in the Jewish Church to the publicans and sinners. Then, so far as any analogy existed between these relations and those of Jew and Gentile, also in them. Nor less does the parable stand good for us. In the Christian Church also elder brothers and prodigals still exist ; and as thousands and ten thousands of the latter have been encouraged by these blessed words to return to a heavenly Father’s house, so will thousands more to the end of time ; nor will any perverse, narrow-hearted, “*elder-brotherly*” interpretation succeed in robbing them of the encouragement which they will ever hold out to wanderers to return and cast themselves boldly on a heavenly Father’s love.\*

those who, *within the Church*, shall have greatly fallen and sinned ; to deprive in fact the parable of all the encouragement which it might otherwise afford to the penitent sinner ; and in his passionate eagerness to make out his point, he does not hesitate to affirm its occasion to have been, quod Pharisæi publicanos et peccatores *ethnicos* admittentem Dominum inussitabant. One cannot sufficiently admire his bold insertion of the *ethnicos* ; nor how elsewhere (*Adv. Marc.* iv. 37), even our Lord’s declaration that Zacchæus was “ a son of Abraham,” is not decisive with him (Zacchæus, *etsi allophylus fortasse*, tamen aliquâ notitiâ Scripturarum ex commercio Judaico afflatus) ; nor his proof from Deut. xxiii. 18, that no Israelite could have been a publican, where it is difficult to think that one so profoundly skilled in all Roman antiquities should not have known better.

\* Tertullian’s fear is lest sinners should be overbold in their sin,



To return : “ *A certain man had two sons; and the younger said to his father, Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.*” The claiming of his share by the younger son in this technical, and almost legal, form\* is a delicate touch, characteristic of the entire alienation from all home affections which has already found place in his heart. Apparently too it is as a right that he claims it, not as a favour : and such a right the Lord *may* mean to assume that he had. Those authors indeed who have brought Oriental customs and manners in illustration of Scripture, however they may prove such a right or custom to have existed among some nations of the East, for example, among the Hindoos, adduce no satisfactory proof of its having been in force among the Jews.† But we *need*

having hope, like the prodigal, to find favour and grace, whenever they will return to their God ; and he asks, “ Who will fear to squander what he can afterwards recover ? Who will care always to keep what he is not in danger of always losing ? ” But is it on calculations of this sort that men rush into sin ? and not rather because they believe their good is there, and not in God ? And how little was he really promoting holiness in this his false zeal for it. for if there had been a deeper depth of sin, into that no doubt the prodigal would have sunk, but that his sure faith in the unchanging love of his father extricated him both from the sin in which he was, and that yet further sin into which he would but for that inevitably have fallen. Tell men after they have sinned grievously, that there is for them no hope of pardon, or, which amounts to the same thing, give them only a dim uncertain distant hope of it, and you will not hinder one by all these precautions and warnings from squandering his goodly heritage, but you may hinder ten thousand prodigals and outcasts that have discovered the wretchedness of a life apart from God, from returning and throwing themselves on the riches of his mercy, and henceforth living, not to the lusts of men, but to his will : and every one of these thus kept at a distance will inevitably be falling from bad to worse, departing farther and farther from his God. It is worth while to see what motives to repentance Chrysostom (*Ad Theod. Laps.* i. 7) draws from this very parable, and his yet more memorable words, *De Pœnit. Hom.* i. 4, where among other things he says,—*οὗτος τοίνυν ὁ υἱὸς εἰκόνα τῶν μετὰ τὸ λουτρὸν φέρει πεισάντων*, which he proceeds to prove. Compare the exposition of the parable by St. Ambrose (*De Pœnit.* ii. 3), as against the Novatianists.

\* *Τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος τῆς οὐσίας* = *ratam hæreditatis partem* ; the phrase, like so many in Luke, is classical and happily selected ; it is of no rare occurrence in good Greek authors (see WETSTEIN, in loc.).

† ROSENMÜLLER, *Alte und Neue Morgenl.* vol. v. p. 115. There is reference indeed to something of the sort, Gen. xxv. 5, 6, where Abra-

not conceive of him as asking his portion otherwise than as a favour: "That portion which will hereafter fall to me, which thou designest for me at last, I would fain receive it now." This portion, according to the Jewish laws of inheritance, would be the half of what the elder brother would receive (Deut. xxi. 17).

But what is the spiritual significance of this request? It is the expression of man's desire to be independent of God, to become a god to himself (Gen. iii. 5), and to lay out his life according to his own will and for his own pleasure. Growing weary of living upon God's fulness, he desires to take the ordering of his life into his own hands, to be a fountain of blessedness to himself.\* This is the sin of sins; all subsequent sins are included in this, as in their germ; they are but the unfolding of this one. Directly opposed to the prodigal's demand, "*Give me my portion of goods,*" is the children's cry, "*Give us this day our daily bread:*" they therein declare their willingness to wait continually upon God, to be fed evermore from his hand; they recognise dependence upon Him as their true blessedness. In the earthly relationship which supplies the groundwork of the parable, the fact of the son first growing weary of receiving from his father, and presently altogether quitting his father's house, has not the *full* amount of guilt which it has in the heavenly; though, indeed, the contempt or slighting of the earthly relationship inevitably brings with it contempt or slighting of the heavenly; the former being constituted to lead us into the knowledge of the blessings which are laid up in the other: and where the lower is despised, the higher will inevitably be despised also.

It would have little profited to retain *him* at home against

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ham in his lifetime would seem to have given the main body of his possessions to Isaac, having given gifts also to the sons of his concubines, evidently their portions; for having endowed them with these, he sent them away. But it seems there recorded as something unusual—probably a wise precaution to avoid disputes after his death.

\* St. Bernard observes, that it is a sign of evil augury, when this son *bonum incipit velle dividere, quod in commune dulcius possidetur, et habere solus, quod participatione non minuitur, partitione amittitur.*

his will, who was already in heart estranged from that home : better for him that he should discover by bitter experience the folly of his request. The father complied with his son's demand, and "*divided unto them his living.*" And such, too, is the dealing of God ; He has constituted man a spiritual being, a being with a will ; and when *his* service no longer appears a perfect freedom, and man promises himself something far better elsewhere, he is allowed to make the trial ;\* he shall discover, and, if need be, by saddest proof, that the only true freedom is a freedom to God ; that to depart from Him is not to throw off the yoke, but to exchange a light yoke for a heavy one, and one gracious master for a thousand imperious tyrants and lords.†

He wrote truly, for he wrote out of the depths of his own experience, who described such another as the prodigal is now in that noble line,

" Lord of himself—that heritage of woe !"

And "heritage of woe" he shall not be long ere he finds it. For "*not many days after the younger son gathered all together,*"—turned, we may suppose, whatever fell to his share into ready money, or jewels, or other valuables which he could easily carry with him, "*and took his journey into a far country.*" On that "*not many days,*" St. Bernard‡ observes well, that the apostasy of the heart will often precede the apostasy of the life. The sinner is indeed pleasing himself ; but the divergence of his will and the will of God does not *immediately* appear. This, however, cannot be for long. After "*not many days*" he will gather together all, and openly depart. By this gathering together of all and departing, nothing less can be meant than the collecting on man's part of all his energies and

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\* See CHRYSOSTOM, *De Pañit. Hom. i. 2.*

† Augustine: Si hærebis superiori, calcabis inferiora ; si autem recedas a superiori, ista tibi in supplicium convertentur. And the Italian proverb: Chi non vuol servir ad un sol signor, a molti ha da servir.

‡ *De Divers. Serm. 8*: Est autem interim homo sub se, cum propriæ satisfaciens voluntati, needum tamen possidetur a vitiis et peccatis. Jam hinc vero proficiscitur ad regionem longinquam, qui prius quidem separatus erat, sed needum elongatus a patre.

powers, with the deliberate determination of getting, through their help, all the gratification he can out of the world,—the open preference of the creature to the Creator,—the *manifest* turning of his back upon God.\* The “*far country*” into which he “*took his journey*,” is a world where God is not.†

And there “the Prodigal,”‡ fitly so called by the Church,

\* Cajetan: *Confidentia in omnibus donis naturæ et gratiæ animi et corporis, est bonorum congregatio.*

† Augustine: *Regio longinqua oblivio Dei est.* Bede: *Non regionibus longe est quisque a Deo, sed affectibus.*

‡ ‘Ο υἱὸς ἁσώτως The title, however, lies wrapped up in the ζῶν ἁσώτως of ver. 13, which no doubt greatly contributed to give us this name. It has a singular fitness, since in the best classical Greek ἁσώτως is the constant word for a son who squanders his patrimony. see the passages in proof in Wetstein (in loc), who indeed is here remarkably rich in his illustrations drawn from classical antiquity. The adjective ἁσώτως nowhere occurs in the N. T., nor the adverb ἀσώτως except here; but the substantive ἁσωτία three times (Ephes. v. 18; 1st i. 6; 1 Pet iv. 4). In the Septuagint ἁσώτως occurs, Prov vii 11, and ἁσωτία, xxviii. 7. The meaning of the word will be slightly, but not essentially, modified; the ἁσώτως will be either the *prodigus* or the *perditus*, according as we give the word an active or a passive derivation. Most give it the active, deriving from ἁ and σῶζειν, prodigus, he who does not spare, who counts that he will never run through what he has. This is Aristotle’s use of the word, which forms part of his ethical terminology, the ἁσώτως, or the prodigal and spendthrift, being set by him over against the ἀνελεύθερος, or the niggard; these two occupying the two ἄκρα, remote alike from a true liberality (*Eth. Nicom.* iv. 1, passim). The ἁσωτία with him has to do exclusively with this kind of excess: ἁσωτία ἐστὶν ὑπερβολὴ περὶ τὰ χρήματα. Chrysostom too in this way explains the word: ἁσώτως, οὐ γὰρ σῶζει, ἀλλ’ ἀπόλλυσιν and Theophylact, who makes ἁσωτία = ἀμετρος χρησις (Suicer, s. v.). But others give it the passive signification of perditus: as Clement of Alexandria, who expressly says (*Pedag.* ii. 1) that ἁσώτως is for ἁσώστος (cf. Philarch, *Alib.* 3), i. e. σῶζεσθαι μὴ δυνάμενος, and that the word is as it were prophetic of their doom who bear it; so Grotius: *Genus hominum ita immersorum vitius ut eorum salus deplorata sit.* He is one who loses and is lost: here too, as so often, the heathen ethical terminology saying more than it meant or knew. We must not restrain the signification of this word either on the one side to intemperance and excess at the table, as Grotius too much has done; in which sense Cicero (*De Fin.* ii. 8) has latinized it; nor yet on the other to what we call more especially fleshly excesses and impurities. Rather ἁσωτία signifies reckless profligate living in its widest extent. Hesychius explains ἀσώτως as = αἰσχροῦς, ἀπλήστως and Athenæus sets the ζῆν κοσμίως over against the ζῆν ἀσώτως and in Plato (*Pol.* viii. 560 E) we have, as a climax, ὕβρις καὶ ἀναρχία καὶ ἁσωτία καὶ ἀναιδεία. Cf. DEYLING, *Obs. Sac.* vol. iii. p. 435.

though this name is nowhere given him in the parable, "*wasted his substance with riotous living*"—so quickly has the *gathering* issued in a *scattering*, so little was it a *gathering* that deserved the name. For a while, we may suppose, the supplies which he brought with him lasted; and so long he may have congratulated himself, and counted that he had done wisely in claiming liberty for himself. Even so the sinner for a while may flatter himself that he is doing well at a distance from God; he discovers not all at once his misery and poverty; for the world has its attractions, and the flesh its pleasures; his affections are not all at once laid waste, nor the sources of natural delight drawn dry in an instant. But it is to this bankruptcy that he is more or less rapidly hastening; he is "*wasting his substance in riotous living*;" and the time surely arrives when he has come to an end of all the satisfaction which the creature can give him, and then it fares with him as with the prodigal; of whom we are told, that "*when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.*"\* He too begins to discover that there is a great spiritual famine in the land where he has chosen to dwell,†—a famine of truth and love, and of all whereby the soul of man indeed lives; he begins to discover that it is an evil and a bitter thing to have forsaken the Lord his God‡

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\* Or rather "he began *himself* to be in want:" the famine reached even to him. The Vulgate has not missed the force of the αἰρώς: *Et ipse cepit egere* (see WINER'S *Grammatik*, p. 142).

† Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* vii. 215): *Etenim qui recedit a verbo Dei esurit, quia non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo Dei: qui recedit a fonte, sitit: qui recedit a thesauro, eget: qui recedit a sapientiâ, hebetatur: qui recedit a virtute, dissolvitur.*

‡ Thus, when a great English poet, with every thing that fortune and rank and genius could give him,—and who had laid out his whole life for pleasure, and not for duty,—yet before he had reached half the allotted period of man, already exclaimed,

My days are in the yellow leaf,  
The flowers, the fruits of love are gone;  
The worm, the canker, and the grief,  
Are mine alone —

what are these deeply affecting words, but the confession of one who,

(Jer. ii. 19; xvii. 5, 6). It is not of necessity that there should be outward distresses or calamities, though often there will be such, to bring on this sense of famine. A man's worldly possessions, supposing him to have such, may stand in their fulness, may go on abounding more and more; all his external helps to felicity may remain: while yet in the true riches he may have run through all, and may be beginning "*to be in want.*" This famine presides often at the groaning tables of rich men, it finds its way into the palaces of kings. In these palaces, at those tables, the immortal soul may be famishing, yea, ready to "*perish with hunger.*"

When we see portrayed in this parable the history of the great apostasy of the heathen world from the knowledge and worship of the true God, as well as the departure of a single soul,\* this wasting of goods will be exactly that which St. Paul describes Rom. i. 19-23, as the remaining part of that chapter will exactly answer to the prodigal's joining himself to the citizen of the far country, and seeking to fill his belly with the swine's husks. The great famine of that heathen world was at its height when the Son of God came in the flesh: in this consisted a part of "the fulness of time," of the fitness of that time, above all other, for his appearing. The glory of the old world was fast fading and perishing. All child-like faith in the old religions had departed; "creeds outworn,"

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having spent all, had found himself in want? Or again, the prodigal's misery, his sense of the barrenness of sin, find a yet deeper voice:

The fire that on my bosom preys  
Is lone as some volcanic isle;  
No torch is lighted at its blaze,  
A funeral pile!

\* We are not in this early part of the parable expressly told, but from ver. 30 we infer, that he consumed "*with harlots*" the living which he had gotten from his father. This too suits well, when we see here the history of the world's departure from God, since in the deep symbolical language of Scripture fornication is the standing image of idolatry; they are, in fact, ever spoken of as one and the same sin, considered now in its fleshly, now in its spiritual, aspect (Jer. iii.; Ezek. xvi. xvii.). And as much, indeed, is implied in the ζῶν ἀσώτως of ver. 13.

they were unable any longer to nourish, ever so little, the spirit of man. The Greek philosophy had completed its possible circle, but it had found no sufficient answer to the doubts and questionings which tormented humanity. "What is truth?" this was the question which all asked,—some, indeed, in mockery, some in despair,—some without the desire, but all equally without the expectation, of obtaining an answer.

When, in this famine, the prodigal "*began to be in want*," for as yet he had but a foretaste of his coming woe, this, no doubt, was a summons to him to return home. But as yet his proud heart was unsubdued, his confidence in his own resources, though perhaps shaken, was not altogether overthrown. The first judgments of God do not always tame; but the stricken sinner exclaims, like Ephraim, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stone; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars" (Isai. ix. 10; Jer. v. 3; Isai. lvii. 10; Amos iv. 6-10). In such a spirit as this "*he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country*,"—"fastened" or "pinned himself upon" him, as Hammond expresses it, hoping to repair his broken fortunes by his help.\* And here, no doubt, is set forth to us a deeper depth in the sinner's downward course, a fall within a fall,†—a more entire and self-conscious yielding of himself in heart and will to the service of sin. He sells himself to the world, joins himself wholly to it. At the same time his relation to it is altered: he is no longer its master, but its slave. We have a hint here of that awful mystery in the downward progress of souls, by which he who begins by using the world to be a servant to minister to his pleasures, must submit in the end to a reversing of the relationship between them, so that the world uses him as its drudge, and sin as its slave. He becomes cheap in the esteem of that very world for the sake of

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\* So Unger: Ἐκολλήθη contemptim, se obtrusit: he thrust himself upon him; as in Latin hæerere or adhærere is often used, with something of contempt, of an inferior who clings to some superior, through whose help he hopes to advance his fortunes; see SUICER, s. v. κολλάσθαι.

† Theophylact. Προόψας τῇ κακίᾳ

which he has forfeited all. Its good wine, which it offered him at the first, it offers him no more, but now that he has well drunk, that which is worse\* (John ii. 10). On the *citizen* of the far country to whom he joins himself now, St. Bernard says: "That citizen I cannot understand as other than one of the malignant spirits, who in that they sin with an irremediable obstinacy, and have passed into a permanent disposition of malice and wickedness, are no longer guests and strangers, but citizens and abiders, in the land of sin." Yet may it not be that by the term "*citizen*" is brought out the deep distinction between the prodigal and the lord to whom for a season he addicted himself? With all his guilt, *he* was not "*a citizen*," but a stranger, in that "*far land*." He did not feel himself at home, nor naturalize himself there. The other was well to do; the famine had not touched him; herein how far more miserable indeed, though he knew it not, than he who "*began to be in want*." For there is hope for the sinner, so long as he feels himself a miserable alien in the land of sin: his case is becoming hopeless, when he has made himself "*a citizen*" there, when he is troubled with no longings after a lost paradise, no remembrance of a better land and of a father's house that he has left behind.

It was small help that the young man found from the new master on whom he had thrust himself, for indeed sinful man finds no mercy from his fellow-sinner: "all thy lovers have forsaken thee," are words which sooner or later shall prove themselves true in respect of every soul that breaks faith with its heavenly bridegroom (cf. Ezek. xvi. 37; xxiii. 22-25). This new master cared not whether he had him or no; and if he must needs engage him, who so crouches to him for a morsel of bread, he will dismiss him out of sight, and send him to the meanest and vilest employment which he has: "*He sent him into his fields to feed swine*." We might guess, did we not know, how exceedingly vile and degrading, and even accursed, this employment was esteemed in the eyes of a

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\* *De Divers. Serm.* 8. See also Cajetan: Subjecit se totaliter Dæmoni, qui vere est civis regionis peccati.



Jew;\* so that misery would seem to have come upon him to the uttermost. And now "*he would fain have filled his belly with the husks† that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.*" Shall we understand that he was reduced so low as to look with a longing eye upon these swine's husks, but that a share even of these which he distributed to them, was withholden from himself? "*no man gave unto him*" of these? So the passage is generally taken:‡ but, since these must have been in his power, we should rather say that in his unscrupulous hunger he was glad to fill himself with these husks, *and did so*,§—no man giving him any nobler sustenance.|| With these he would fain have "*filled his belly*;"¶ the expression

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\* See LIGHTFOOT'S *Hor. Heb.* on Matt. viii. 30; and GFRÖRER'S *Urchristenthum*, vol. i. p. 115. Herodotus (ii. 47) describes the swineherds as the only persons who were excluded from the temples in Egypt.

† These *κεράτια* are not the husks or pods of some other fruit, but themselves the fruit of the carob tree (*κεραυωρία*), of which there is a good account in WINER'S *Realwörterbuch*, s. v. *Johannis Brodtbaum*. This name of "St John's bread" the tree derives from the tradition that the Baptist fed upon its fruit in the wilderness. I have tasted them in Calabria, where they are very abundant, and being sold at a very low price are sometimes eaten by the poorer people, but are mainly used for foddering domestic animals. They are also common in Spain, and still more so on the northern coasts of Africa, and in the Levant. They are in shape something like a bean-pod, though larger, and curved more into the form of a sickle: thence called *κεράτιον*, or little horn, and the tree sometimes in German, *Bockshornbaum*. They have a dark hard outside, and a dull sweet taste, hardly, I think, justifying Pliny's *prædulces* siliquæ. Wine was sometimes expressed from it in ancient times; Robinson mentions when steeped in water they afford a pleasant drink: the fruit within is bitter and cast aside MALDONATUS gives an accurate account of the *κεράτιον*, and see POLE'S *Synopsis* (in loc.), and ROSENMÜLLER'S *Alte und Neue Morgenland*, vol. v. p. 198.

‡ Thus Luther: Und niemand gab sie ihm. Bernard (*De Convers.* 8): Merito siliquas esuriit, et non accepit, qui porcos pascere maluit, quam paternis epulis satiari.

§ Calvin: Significat præ fame non amplius cogitasse veteres delicias, sed avide vorasse siliquas: neque enim cum porcis ipse daret hoc cibi genus, carere potuit. . . Additur ratio, quia *nemo illi dabat*, nam copula in causalem particulam, meo judicio, resolvi debet.

|| Or the words *καὶ οὐδὲς ἐδίδον αὐτῷ* may be a new and the final touch in the picture of his misery, and express generally that there was none that showed any pity upon him.

¶ *Γεμίσαι τὴν κοιλίαν*. Stella: Hominem non satiant, sed ven-

is chosen of design; all he could hope from them was just this, to dull his gnawing pain, not that he should with them truly satisfy his hunger; for the food of beasts could not appease the cravings of man. Thus a deepest moral truth will lie under the words,—that none but God can satisfy the longing of an immortal soul; that as the heart was made for Him, so He only can fill it.

The whole description is wonderful, and in nothing more so than the evident relation in which his punishment stands to his sin. "He who would not, as a son, be treated liberally by his father, is compelled to be the servant and bond-slave of a foreign master; he who would not be ruled by God, is compelled to serve the devil; he who would not abide in his father's royal palace, is sent to the field among hinds; he who would not dwell among brethren and princes, is obliged to be the servant and companion of brutes; he who would not feed on the bread of angels, petitions in his hunger for the husks of the swine."\* In his feeding of swine, what a picture have we of man, "serving divers lusts and pleasures," in whom the divine is for the time totally obscured, and the bestial merely predominant. And in his fruitless attempt to fill his belly with the husks, what a picture, again, of man seeking through the unlimited gratification of his appetites to appease the fierce hunger of his soul. But in vain, for still "he enlarges his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied." One might as well hope to quench a fire by adding fuel to it, as to slake desire by gratifying it† (Ezek. xvi.

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trem tantum gravant; and Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* vii. 217): *Cibus . . . quo corpus non reficitur, sed impletur.* Augustine: *Pascebatur de siliquis, non satiabatur.*

\* Corn. à Lapide.

† Jerome (*Ad Dam. Ep.* xxi. 18): *Non poterat saturari, quia semper voluptas famem sui habet, et transacta non satiat;* and Bernard, though elsewhere he has affirmed the other, yet brings out this interpretation also on its ethical side (*De Convers.* 14): *Neque enim parit hanc [satietaem] copia sed contemptus. Sic fatui filii Adam, porcorum vorando siliquas, non esurientes animas sed esuriem ipsam pascitis animarum. Sola nimirum hoc edulio inedia vestra nutritur, sola fames alitur cibo innaturali.*

28, 29). And the crowning misery is, that the power of sinful gratifications to stay that hunger even for the moment is ever diminishing,—the pleasure which is even hoped for from them still growing fainter, and yet the goad behind, urging to seek that pleasure, still becoming fiercer,—the sense of the horrible nature of the bondage ever increasing, with the power of throwing off that bondage ever diminishing.\* All the monstrous luxuries and frantic wickednesses which we read of in later Roman history, at that close of the world's Pagan epoch, stand there like the last despairing effort of man to fill his belly with the husks.† The attempt by her emperors was carried out under all the most favourable circumstances of wealth and power; for, in Solomon's words, "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" In this light we may behold the incredibly sumptuous feasts,—the golden palaces,—the enormous shows and spectacles,—and all the pomp and pride of life, carried to the uttermost,‡—the sins of nature, and the sins below nature; while yet from amidst all these the voice of man's misery only made itself the louder heard. The experiment carried out on this largest scale only caused the failure to be more signal, only proved the more plainly that of the food of beasts there could not be made the nourishment of men.

It might be here, perhaps, urged, that the picture drawn in the parable, if it be applied to more than a very few the deepest sunk in depravity, is an exaggeration both of the misery and also of the wickedness even of those who have turned their backs upon God; that, in the corruptest times

\* Cajetan: *Quieto siquidem dominio jam possidentes dæmones hominem, invident illi satietatem appetitûs, quam tamen procurabant quousque illum plene sibi subjecerunt. Compare a passage from the Tabula of Cebes, quoted by Mr. Greswell (Exp. of the Par. vol. iii. p. 586).*

† Augustine's explanation is not virtually different; the "*husks*" are for him *seculares doctrinæ steriles, vanitate resonantes*; such as had been to himself once his own Manichæan figments. Cf. Jerome (*Ad Dam. Ep. xxi. 13*), and H. de Sto. Victore: *Sordida figmenta poetarum, et diversis erroribus polluta dogmata philosophorum.*

‡ See, for instance, SÆTONIUS, *Caligula*, xix. 37.

not all, and in more moral epochs only a few even of these fall so low in wretchedness and guilt. This is quite true; yet all might thus fall. By the first departure from God, all this misery and all this sin are rendered possible; they all are its legitimate results; and they only do not always follow, because God, in his infinite mercy, does not suffer sin, in all cases, to bear *all* the bitter fruit which it might, and which are implicitly contained in it. In the present case, it *is* suffered to bear all its bitter fruit: we have one who has done "evil with both hands earnestly," and debased himself even unto hell; and the parable would be incomplete without this; it would not be a parable for all sinners; since it would fail to show that there is no extent of departure from God, which renders a return to Him impossible.

Hitherto we have followed the sinner step by step in a career which is ever carrying him further and further from his God. But now the crisis has arrived, the *περιπέτεια* of this "Soul's Tragedy;" and a happier task remains—to trace the steps of his return, from the first beginnings of repentance to his full re-investiture in all the rights and privileges of a son. For though he has forsaken his God, he has not been forsaken by Him—not in that far land, nor even among the swine's husks; for all the misery which has fallen on him was indeed an expression of God's anger against sin, but at the same time of his love to the sinner. He hedges up the way of the sinner with thorns, that he may not find his paths (Hos. ii. 6); He makes his sin bitter to him, that he may forsake it. In this way He pursues his fugitives, summoning them back to Himself in that only language which now they will understand.\* He allows the world to make its bondage hard to them, that they may know the difference between his service and the service of the kings of the countries (2 Chron. xii. 8); that those whom He is about to deliver may at last cry, and to Him, by reason of the bitter bondage (2 Chron.

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\* AUGUSTINE, *Enarr in Ps.* cxxxviii. 3, 4.

xxxiii. 11-13). Here we have one upon whom this severe but loving discipline is not wasted.\* And yet on how many is it wasted. How many, even at this point, come to no such blessed resolution as he does. They betake them to some other citizen of that far country, who promises them a little better fare, or treatment a little less contemptuous. Or it may be they learn to dress their husks, so that they shall look like human food, and they then deny that they are the fodder of swine. Or, glorying in their shame, and wallowing in the same sty with the beasts they feed, they proclaim that there was never intended to be any difference between the food of men and of beasts, nor yet between the enjoyment of these and of those. But "*he came to himself.*"† How full of consolation are these words: to come to one's self then, and to come to God, are one and the same thing; or at least are most closely connected together. He being the true ground of our being, when we find ourselves we find Him; or rather, because we have found Him, we find also ourselves.‡ It is not the man living in union with God who is raised above the true condition of humanity; but the man not so living, who has fallen out of and fallen below that condition.

And what were his first thoughts now? "*How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*"§ This too is a touch of deepest nature; for the sinner never so feels the discord which he has introduced into his innermost being, as when he compares himself with that world which is around and beneath him. He sees the happy animals undisturbed with his longings, unable to stain themselves with his sins; he beholds all nature calm and at rest, and fulfilling in law and in order the pur-

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\* Augustine: *Divinæ misericordiæ severa disciplina.*

† How remarkable a parallel the words of Seneca (*Ep.* 53) supply: *Quare vitia sua nemo confitetur? quia etiam nunc in illis est. Somnium narrare, vigilantis est; et vitia sua confiteri, sanitatis indicium.*

‡ See Augustine, *Serm.* xvi. 2: *Si reversus est ad se, exierat a se.* One of the names of Christian repentance, and it is a very instructive one, is *resipiscentia*, or a becoming wise again.

§ *Τῷ αἰσχύσῳ ὀλίθρῳ, λιμῷ τελευτῆσαι*, Thucyd. iii. 59.

poses for which it was ordained. Everywhere else peace and joy; he only condemned

"To be a jarring and a dissonant thing  
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy."

He sees also many of his fellow-men, who, without any very lofty views concerning living to the glory of God, without any very lively affections towards Him, do yet find their satisfaction in the discharge of their daily duties; who, though they do his work rather in the spirit of servants than of sons, rather looking to their hire than out of the free impulse of love, are yet not without their reward. It is true, they may not have the highest joy of his salvation; yet, on the other hand, they are far from the misery and destitution into which he has sunk. "*Hired servants*" of his father as they may be, they yet "*have bread enough and to spare*," while he a son, and having once had the portion and place of a son, is perishing with hunger.\*

We may picture the young man to ourselves as having sat long while upon the ground, revolving the extreme misery into which he had fallen; for the earth presents itself as the natural throne of the utterly desolate (Job ii. 8, 13). But now he gathers up anew his prostrate energies, as a better hope wakens in his bosom: "Why should I sit longer among the swine? *I will arise,† and go to my father.*" These words the Pelagians of old adduced in proof that man could turn to God in his own strength,‡ that he needed not a drawing from above, a grace at once preventing and following, that the good thought was his own; just as the (self-styled) Unitarians of

\* This, in the main, is the interpretation of these words by the Fathers. See Jerome (*Ad Dam. Ep. xxi. 14*), Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc. vii. 220*), and Bernard (*De Divers. Serm. 8*): *Quis enim peccati consuetudine obligatus, non se felicem reputaret, si datum esset ei esse tanquam unum ex his, quos in seculo tepidos videt, viventes sine crimine, minime tamen quærentes quæ sursum sunt, sed quæ super terram?* Cf. SCHOETTGEN'S *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. pp. 260, 532.

† Augustine: *Surgam, dixit—sederat enim.*

‡ But Augustine says in reply (*Ep. 186*): *Quam cogitationem bonam quando haberet, nisi et ipsam illi in occulto Pater misericordissimus inspirasset?* Cf. *Enarr. in Ps. lxxvii 39.*

modern times find in the circumstances of the prodigal's return a proof that the sinner's repentance alone is sufficient to reconcile him with his God, and that without a Mediator or a sacrifice. But these conclusions are sufficiently guarded against by innumerable clearest declarations; the first by such as John vi. 44; the second by such passages as Heb. x. 19-22; nor are we to expect that every passage in Scripture shall contain the whole circle of Christian doctrine; but the different portions of truths being gathered by the Church out of the different parts of Scripture, are by her presented to her children in their due proportions and entire completeness.

Returning to that father, he "*will say unto him, Father;*" for that relation was one which, as his obedience has not constituted, so his disobedience could not annul. And what is it that gives the sinner now a sure ground of confidence, that returning to God he shall not be repelled or cast out? The adoption of sonship, which he received in Christ Jesus at his baptism, and his faith that the gifts and calling of God are on his part without repentance or recall. For the recollection of his baptism is not to him as a menacing angel, keeping with a fiery sword the gates of that Paradise which he has forfeited, and to which he now vainly desires admission again; but there he finds consolation and strength;—he too, wretched and degraded though he be, may say "Our Father" yet, and claim anew his admission into the household of faith, on the ground that he was once made a member thereof, and that his privileges abide for him still in their full force, however he may have chosen to remain in guilty ignorance of them for so long. "*I have sinned against heaven, and before thee;*" he recognizes his offence to have been committed not merely against man, but "*against heaven;*" he shows his repentance to have been divinely wrought, a work of the Spirit, in that he acknowledges his sin in its root, as a transgression of the divine law, as exceedingly sinful, being wrought against God. Thus David: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned;" while yet his offences had been against the second table. For we may *injure* ourselves by our evil, we may *wrong* our neighbour;

but, strictly speaking, we can *sin* only against God; and the recognition of our evil as first and chiefly an offence against Him, is of the essence of all true repentance, and distinguishes it broadly from many other kinds of sorrow which may follow on evil deeds. When we come to give these words their higher application, the two acknowledgments, "*I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*" merge into one, "*I have sinned against thee, my Father in heaven.*" This willingness to confess is noted here and in all Scripture as a sign of a true repentance begun, even as the sinner's refusal to humble himself in confession before God is the sure note of a continued obduracy (2 Sam. xii. 13; Job ix. 20; xxxi. 33; xxxiii. 27; Prov. xxviii. 13; Jer. ii. 35; xvi. 10; Hos. xiv. 2; 1 John i. 9, 10). In Augustine's words, "He shows himself worthy, in that he confesses himself unworthy."\*

With this deep feeling of his unworthiness, he will confess that he has justly forfeited all which once was his: "*I am no more worthy to be called thy son.*" This is well, and a confession such as this belongs to the essence of all true repentance. But the words that follow,† "*Make me as one of thy hired servants,*"—are these, it may be asked, the words of returning spiritual health, so that we should desire to meet the temper which they imply in each *normal* repentance, or not? We only here observe that at a later period he drops them (ver. 21), and shall then have something more to say in regard of them. A scholar of St. Bernard's here exclaims: "Keep,

\* And again *Esto accusator tuus, et ille erit indultor tuus*; cf *Enarr in Ps. xxxi. 5*. Tertullian (*De Penit. ix. 10*) has many useful remarks, in connexion with this parable, on the benefit of unreserved confession: *Tantum relevat confessio delictorum quantum dissimulatio exaggerat. Confessio enim satisfactionis consilium est, dissimulatio, contumaciæ . . .* In quantum non pepercieris tibi, in tantum tibi Deus, crede, parcat. The whole treatise breathes a far different spirit from that in which the other above referred to, *De Pudicitia*, is written; and yet is most useful, as showing us how serious and earnest a thing repentance was accounted in the early Church; how much it linked itself with outward self-denials and humiliations.

† Cajetan: *Non audebo petere reintegrationem in statum filii, in pristina dona grandia: sed petam dona incipientium, qui amore æternæ mercedis serviunt Deo.*



O happy sinner, keep watchfully and carefully this thy most just feeling of humility and devotion: by which thou mayest ever esteem the same of thyself in humility, of the Lord in goodness. Than it there is nothing greater in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nothing more precious in the treasures of God, nothing more holy among all graces, nothing more wholesome among [all] sacraments. Keep, I say, if thou wilt thyself be kept, the humility of that speech and feeling, with which thou confessest to thy Father, and sayest, '*Father, I am no more worthy to be called thy son.*' For humility is of all graces the chiefest, even while it does not know itself to be a grace at all. From it they begin, by it they advance, in it they are consummated, through it they are preserved."\* But it is wholly against the spirit of this parable, when the same writer exhorts him still to persist in taking the place of a servant, even after his father shall have bidden him to resume the position of a son. This is that false humility of which we find so much, and which often is so mightily extolled, in monkery, but of which we find nothing in this parable, nor elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is true humility, when bidden to go up higher, to go. It was true humility in Peter to suffer the Lord to wash his feet; as it would have been false humility, as well as disobedience, to have resisted longer than he did (John xiii. 6-10); it was true humility in the prodigal, when his father would have it so, to accept at once the position of a son.

There is no tarrying now; what he has determined to do, at once he does; "*he arose, and came to his father.*" He had believed in his father's love; he shall find that love far larger and freer than he had dared to believe. "*When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck* (Gen. xlv. 14; xlv. 29; Job xi. 9), *and kissed him.*" The evidences of the father's love are described with a touching minuteness; he does not wait for the poor

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\* Guerrius (*Bernardi Opp.* vol. ii. p. 986): Humilitas siquidem omnium virtutum est maxima, cum tamen virtutem se esse nesciat: ab ipsâ incipiunt, per ipsam proficiunt, in ipsâ consummantur, per ipsam conservantur.

returning wanderer till he has come all the way, but himself hastens forward to meet him; he does not wear at first an aspect of severity, only after a season to be relaxed or laid aside, but at once welcomes him with the kiss, which is something more than an evidence of affection, being the significant, and in the East well understood, pledge of reconciliation and peace (Gen. xxxiii. 4; 2 Sam. xiv. 33; Ps. ii. 12). It is thus the Lord draws nigh unto them that draw nigh unto Him\* (Jam. iv. 8), sees them while they are "*yet a great way off*." It was He who put within them even the first weak motions toward good; and as his grace prevented them, so also it meets them. He listens to the first faint sighings of their hearts after Him, for it was He who first awoke those sighings there (Ps. x. 17). And though they may be "*yet a great way off*," though there may be very much of ignorance in them still, far too slight a view of the evil of their own sin, or of the holiness of the God with whom they have to deal, yet He meets them, notwithstanding, with the evidences of his mercy and reconciled love. Neither makes He them first to go through a dreary apprenticeship of servile fear at a distance from Him, before He will receive them; but at once embraces them in the arms of his love, giving them at this first moment strong consolations—perhaps stronger and more abounding than afterwards, when they are settled in their Christian course, they will always receive. And this, because such they need at this moment, to assure them that, notwithstanding their moral loathsomeness and defilement, they are accepted in Christ Jesus, to convince them of that which it is so hard for the sinner to believe, which it is indeed the great work of faith to realize, that God has indeed put away their sin, and is pacified toward them.

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\* Thus there is an Eastern proverb, "If man draws near to God an inch, God will draw near to him an ell;" or as Von Hammer (*Fundly. d. Orients*, vol. iv. p. 91) gives it:

Wer sich mir eine Spanne weit naht, dem eile ich eine Elle lang entgegen;

Und wer mir gehend entgegen kömmt, dem eile ich in Sprünge zu.

But the prodigal, though thus graciously received, though his sin is not once mentioned against him, yet not the less makes the confession which he had determined in his heart, when the purpose of returning was first conceived by him. And this is well; for though God may forgive, man is not therefore to forget. Nor should we fail to note that it is *after*, and not *before*, the kiss of reconciliation, that this confession finds place; that kiss did not stop the mouth of his confession, but opened it rather; for the more the sinner knows and tastes of the love of God, the more he grieves ever to have sinned against that love. It is under the genial rays of this kindly love, that the heart, which was before bound up as by a deadly frost, begins to thaw and to melt and loosen, and the waters of repentance to flow freely forth. The knowledge of God's love in Christ is the cruse of salt which alone can turn the bitter and barren-making streams of remorse into the healing waters of repentance (2 Kin. ii. 19-22). And thus the truest and best repentance follows, and does not precede, the sense of forgiveness; and thus too will repentance be a thing of the whole life long, for every new insight into that forgiving love is as a new reason why the sinner should mourn that he ever sinned against it. It is a mistake to affirm that men, those, I mean, in whom there is a real spiritual work going forward, will lay aside their repentance, so soon as they are convinced of the forgiveness of their sins, and that therefore,—since repentance, deep, earnest, long-continued, self-mortifying repentance, is a good thing, as indeed it is,—the longer men can be kept in suspense concerning their forgiveness the better, as in this way a deeper foundation of repentance will be laid. This is surely a preposterous view of the relations in which repentance and forgiveness stand to each other; and their true relation is rather opened to us in such passages as Ezek. xxxvi. 31, where the Lord says, "*Then*" (and for what that "*then*" means, see ver. 24-30; *after* I have cleansed you,—after I have given you a new heart,—have heaped all my richest blessings upon you, *then*, under the sense of these) "*shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that*

were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations." Cf. Ezek. xvi. 60-63, where the Lord declares He has established his covenant with Judah for the very purpose, "that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, *when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done.*" The younger son, albeit that he has the clearest evidence that his father is pacified toward him, does not the less confess his shame. He does not indeed say all that he had once intended, he does not say, "*Make me as one of thy hired servants.*" for this was the one troubled element of his repentance, this purpose of shrinking back from his father's love, and from the free grace which would restore to him all: and in his dropping of these words, in his willingness to be blest by his father to the uttermost, if such is his father's pleasure, there is beautiful evidence that the grace which he has already received he has not received in vain. Bengel thinks it possible that his father cut him short, and so took these words out of his mouth, but has also suggested the truer explanation.\*

And now the father declared plainly in act that he meant to restore to him a place and a name in his house again; for he "*said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet,*" these all being the ornaments, not of the slave, but of the free;† all, therefore, speaking of restoration to his former

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\* Vel quod ex obvii patris comitate accensa filialis fiducia omnem servilem sensum absorberet, vel quod patris comitas sermonem filii abrumperet. So Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* ii. qu. 33): Cum enim panem non haberet, vel mercenarius esse cupiebat; quod post osculum patris generosissime jam dedignatur.

† Thus Tertullian (*De Resur. Carn.* 57), speaking of the manumitted slave: *Vestis albæ nitore, et aurei annuli honore, et patroni nomine ac tribu mensæque honoratur.* Grotius: *Δακτύλιον* apud Romanos ingenuitatis, apud Orientes *populos dignitatis eximiae signum*, aut etiam opulentiae (*Jac.* ii. 2). He might have added *Gen.* xli. 42. Cf. ELSNER, in the *Biblioth. Brem.* vol. iii. p. 908; and for the significance of the ring, the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. Rings, p. 824.

dignity and to his lost privileges. Or, if we cannot suppose the Roman customs, which accompanied the lifting up of a slave to a freeman's rank, to have been familiarly known in Palestine, or to be here alluded to, yet the giving of the robe and ring were ever accounted in the East among the highest tokens of favour and honour (Gen. xli. 42; 1 Macc. vi. 15); so that, in fact, these words would still testify of highest blessings and chiefest favours in store for the prodigal.

Few even of those interpreters commonly most averse to the giving a spiritual meaning to the minuter details of a parable, have been able to resist the temptation of doing so here. Yet it has been debated whether "*the best robe*," as we have it in our translation, expresses most accurately the intention of the original, or whether it should not be "*the former\* robe*," that which he wore when of old he walked as a son in his father's house, which has been kept for him, and shall now be restored. The difference is not important (though our translation is clearly the right)—nor yet whether we say, that by the giving of this robe is signified the imputation to him of the righteousness of Christ,† or the restoration of sanctity to his soul. If we see in it his rehabilitation in his baptismal privileges, then both will be included. They who shall "*bring forth the best robe*" have been generally interpreted as the ministers of reconciliation; and if we may imagine them first to have removed from him, as they would naturally have done, the tattered garments, the poor swineherd's rags

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\* The Vulgate: *Stolam primam*, Tertullian: *Vestem pristinam, priorem*; Theophylact: *τὴν στολὴν τὴν ἀρχαίαν*. But rather, *Stolam illam præstantissimam*; as Euthymius: *τὴν τιμιωτάτην*. Cf. Gen. xxvii. 15, lxx. *τὴν στολὴν τὴν καλήν*. There need no quotations to prove how often *πρῶτος* is used in this sense of the chiefest, the most excellent (see 1 Chron. xxvii. 33; Ezek. xxvii. 22, lxx.). Passow, s. v.: *der vornehmste, angesehenste*. The *στολή* is the *vestis talaris*, the long and wide upper garment of the higher classes (Mark xii. 38).

† Tertullian: *Indumentum Spiritûs Sancti*. Jerome: *Stolam quæ in aliâ parabolâ indumentum dicitur nuptiale*. Augustine: *Stola prima est dignitas quam perdidit Adam; and in another place, spes immortalitatis in baptismo*. Theophylact: *τὸ ἔνδυμα τῆς ἀφθαρσίας*. Guerricus: *Sanctificatio Spiritûs, quâ baptizatus induitur et pœnitens reinduitur*.

which were hanging about him, then Zech. iii. 4 will supply an interesting parallel. Those who stood before the Lord there, would answer to the servants here; and what they did for Joshua there, removing his filthy garments from him, and clothing him with a change of raiment, and setting a fair mitre on his head, the same would the servants do here for the son, with the difference only that instead of the mitre, the appropriate adornment there of the high priest, the ring and the shoes are here mentioned; and the symbolic act has in each case, no doubt, the same signification; what that is, the Lord there expressly declares, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." These words, brought to bear on the passage before us, make it, I think, more probable that, by this bringing out of the best robe, and putting it upon him, is especially signified that act of God, which, considered on its negative side, is a release from condemnation, a causing the sinner's iniquity to pass from him,—on its positive side, is an imputation to him of the merits and righteousness of his Lord (Isai. lxi. 10).

This explanation for other reasons also is preferable, since we have the gift or restoration of the Spirit indicated in the ring with which the returning wanderer is also adorned. It is well known, and despite Pliny's\* denial is unquestionable, that in the East, as with us, the ring was also often a seal† (Esth. iii. 10, 12; Jer. xxii. 24) which naturally brings here to our mind such passages as Ephes. i. 13, 14; 2 Cor. i. 22, in which *a sealing* by God's Spirit is spoken of, whereby the faithful are assured, as by an earnest, of a larger inheritance

\* *H. N.* xxxiii. 6. Speaking of the seal-ring, he says: Non signat Oriens aut Ægyptus etiam nunc, litteris contenta solis. Later discoveries have shown this as erroneous concerning Egypt as the East; see too Herodotus, ii. 38.

† Clem. Alex. (Potter's ed. p. 1017): *Σήμαντρον βασιλικὸν καὶ σφραγίδα θεῖαν*, and presently after, *ἀποσφράγισμα δόξης*. The fragment whence these words are taken is interesting in many respects;—and among others in this, that the author, whether Clement or another, affirms of the prodigal that he had not merely wasted the natural gifts of God, but especially abused *τῶν τοῦ βαπτίσματος ἡξιωμένων καλῶν*.

one day coming to them, and which witnesses with their spirits that they are the sons of God (Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 5). The ring, too, may be the pledge of betrothal: \* "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies, and I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord" (Hos. ii. 19, 20).† The shoes also are put upon his feet, to which answers the promise, "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name" (Zech. x. 12). The penitent shall be equipped for holy obedience,‡ having his "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Ephes. vi. 15). No strength shall be wanting to him (Deut. xxxiii. 25). When it is added, "*Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it,*" it would create a confusion of images again to go back, as does Origen,§ to the sacrifice of Christ, which was implicitly contained in the first image, that of the giving of the robe, and moreover is not a consequence of the sinner's return, as the killing of the fatted calf is the consequence of the prodigal's, but the ground which renders that

\* Ambrose (*De Pœnit* ii. 3): Det annulum in manu ejus, quod est fidei pignus, et Sancti Spiritûs signaculum.

† The whole chapter affords deeply interesting parallels: ver. 5 (the latter part) answering to ver. 11, 12 here; ver. 6-13 there to 13-19 here; and ver. 14-23 to 20-24.

‡ Guericus: Calceamenta, quibus ad calcanda serpentum venena munitur, vel ad evangelizandum præparatur. Grotius, quoting Ephes. vi. 15, adds: Nimirum pœnitentibus in gratiam receptis etiam hoc Deus concedit, ut apti sint aliis aut voce aut certe exemplo docendis; and he quotes well Ps. li. 13. Cf. Clemens Alex. (Potter's ed. p. 1018) for much that is beautiful, and something that is fanciful, on these "*shoes*,"—though the ὑποδήματα were rather sandals than shoes, the latter being in very rare use in the East. The word is used interchangeably with σανδάλια by the LXX., though there is a distinction (see TITTMANN'S *Synonyms*, and the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Ant.* s. v. Sandalium, p. 839) Much luxury was often displayed among the wealthy in this article of dress (see Judith xvi. 9; Ezek. xvi. 10; Cant. vii. 1); so that we can easily understand why they should have been especially mentioned; not to say that slaves usually went *dis-calceati*.

§ *Hom.* 1 in *Levit.*

return possible.\* Nor should we, I think, here see (with Tertullian† and Clement of Alexandria) special allusion to the Holy Eucharist, but more generally to the festal joy and rejoicing which is in heaven at the sinner's return, and no less in the Church on earth, and in his own heart also.‡

As in the preceding parables, the shepherd summons his friends (ver. 6), and the woman her female neighbours (ver. 9), so here the householder his servants, to be sharers in his joy. For the very nature of true joy is, that it *runs over*, that it longs to impart itself: and if this be true of the joy on earth, how much more of the yet holier joy in heaven.§ And summoning them to rejoice, the father declares to them the ground of the joy in which they are invited to share. In the earthly household some might naturally be presumed to make part of the household now, who had not belonged to it at the time of the young man's departure. To them therefore it is needful to declare that this wanderer, whom they had beheld just now in the swineherd's rags, was no less than a son of the house, and to be henceforth by them treated and honoured as such. And that there may be no doubt on this matter, the father solemnly reinstates him before them all in the honours of a son. "*This my son,*" he says—and then, comparing the present with the past, "*was dead;*"—for the state of sin is ever considered in Scripture as a state of death (1 John iii. 14; Matt. viii. 22; 1 Tim. v. 6; Ephes. ii. 1), "*and is alive again;*"—"he was lost, and is found" (1 Pet. ii. 25); and since thus the lost was found, and the dead alive again, "*they began to be merry.*"

At this point the parable, like the two preceding, might

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\* Augustine evades this difficulty: Tunc enim cuique [Christus] occiditur, cum credit occisum.

† *De Pudic.* 9.

‡ Arndt (*De Vero Christ.* ii. 8): Hoc convivium innuit gaudium angelorum, sive *vivificantem, letificantem, et coronantem* misericordiam quam Ps. lxi. 5; Jes. lvi. 13, depingit.

§ Origen (*Hom.* 23 in *Lev.*) on the words "*My feasts,*" which there occur, asks: Habet ergo Deus dies festos suos? Habet. Est enim ei magna festivitas humana salus.



have ended. But the "*two sons*" of ver. 11 had already indicated a wider and further intention in this present than in those; and complete as is this earlier part within itself, yet is it also to form part of another and more complex whole, and to derive new beauty from the contrast which is thus brought out between the large heart of God and the narrow grudging heart of man. For the purposes of this contrast the elder brother, who as yet has been named to us and no more, is now brought upon the scene. "*In the field,*" and occupied in the labours of the field, he knew nothing as yet of his brother's penitence, of his father's joy. The festival had already begun, the gladness was rising ever higher and higher, when, the toils of the day concluded, he was returning home, "*and as he drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing.*" It would be alien, let me observe by the way, to the manners and feelings of the East, to suppose the guests themselves engaged in these diversions: they would but be listeners and spectators, the singers and dancers being hired for the occasion. It is not for nothing we are told he had been absent "*in the field;*" for thus we learn that while his brother had been wasting all, his whole portion of goods, in riot abroad, he had been engaged at home, on his father's ground, in pursuits of useful industry. Surprised at these unaccustomed sounds, "*he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.*" With what delicate touches the ungenial character of the man is indicated already. He does not at once go in; he does not take for granted that when his father makes a feast, there is matter worthy of making merry about. But, as if already determined to dislike what is proceeding, he prefers to remain without, and to learn from a servant the occasion of the joy; or, as he significantly puts it, "*what these things meant,*" demanding an explanation, as if they required it. And then the tidings that his father had received his brother "*safe and sound,*"\* with the contemplation of his father's joy, his

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\* How nice is the observance of all the lesser proprieties of the narration. The father, in the midst of all his natural affection, is yet

brother's safety, instead of stirring up any gladness in his heart, move him rather to displeasure; "*he was angry*," and in place of rushing to that brother's arms, he "*would not go in*."

Nor even when his father bore with him so far as to come out and entreat him, would he lay aside his displeasure, but loudly complained of the unfairness with which *he* was treated, and the bounty which was bestowed upon his brother's misconduct: "*Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.*"\* And then he invidiously compares the father's conduct to his brother; "*This thy son*," he says not, my brother,—"*which hath devoured thy living*," again invidiously, for in a sense it was *his own*—"with harlots," very probably, but only a presumption on his part—"as soon as he was come," he says not, *was returned*,† as of one who had now at length resumed his own place, but speaks of him as a stranger,—upon the first moment of his arrival, and after years, not of duty, but disobedience,—"*thou hast killed for him*" not a kid merely, but the choicest calf in the stall. What would he have said, had he known all, and seen him arrayed in the best robe, and with all his other adornments, when this which alone he mentions,

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full of the moral significance of his son's return—that he has come back another person from what he was, when he went, or while he tarried in that far land; he sees into the deep of his joy, that he is receiving him now indeed a son, once dead but now alive, once lost to him and to God, but now found alike by both. But the servant confines himself to the more external features of the case, to the fact that, after all he has gone through of excess and hardship, his father has yet received him "*safe and sound*" (*ὡγαίνοντα* = *salvum et servatum*, Plautus, *Aulul.* iv. 6, 11; *salvum et sospitem*, *Capt.* iv. 2, 93). Even if he could enter deeper into the matter, yet with a suitable discretion he confines himself to that which falls plainly under his and every one's eye.

\* Jerome (*Ad Dam. Ep.* 21), finding an emphasis in these last words, "*with my friends*," asks of him: *Potest esse tibi aliqua jucunditas nisi patre tecum celebrante convivium?* Cf. BERNARD, *In Cant. Serm.* xiv. 4.

† This is one of Bengel's fine and delicate notices: *Venit, dicit, ut de alieno loquens: non, rediit.*

as it is all which he has learned from his informant, so moves his indignation?

It is too joyful an occasion for the father to take the just exception which he might have taken at the tone and temper of this remonstrance. There shall not be, if he can help it, a cloud upon any brow; and instead of answering with aught of severity, he expostulates with the malcontent; he would have **him** see the unreasonableness of his complaint; and does not fail to warn him that he is now, in fact, falling into the very sin of his brother, when he said, "*Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.*" He is feeling as though he did not truly possess what he possessed *with* his father, as though he must separate something off from his father's stock, before he could call it truly his own. The father's answer is a warning against this evil, which lay at the root of the elder brother's speech, though it had spoken out more plainly in the younger's: "*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine;*" and then he makes him see the unloving spirit, out of which his discontent proceeded; "*It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother*" (not merely "*my son,*" as thou hast ungraciously put it, but "*thy brother,*" *kinned* to thee, and to whom therefore *thy kindness* is due)—he "*was dead, and is alive again,\* was lost, and is found.*"

What success the father's expostulations met, we are not told. Whether we shall assume them to have been successful or not will, in fact, be mainly determined by the interpretation which we give to this concluding portion of the parable. Those who see in the younger brother the Gentile, and therefore in the elder the Jew,† certainly find this portion of it encumbered with fewer difficulties than such as deny that its *primary* purpose can be to set forth their history, and their relations to one another and to God. As in the interpreta-

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\* SCHOETTGEN, *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 877.

† See in Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* ii. qu. 89) a most ingenious interpretation of the parable in this spirit.

tion which I have here sought to establish, the correctness of such application, as the primary at least, has been denied, it will be needful to look elsewhere for a solution of the difficulties, which are indeed the same which meet us in the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. They resolve themselves into this single one,—Is *their* righteousness, whom the elder brother represents, real or not? If real, how can this be reconciled with his contumacy towards his father, and his unloving spirit towards his brother? \* • For does the true believer accuse God of injustice in his dealings with men? does he grudge, and not rather rejoice, when one who has departed more widely, it may be, than himself, is brought home to the true fold? How, again, does the supposition that his righteousness was real, agree with the aim of this part of the parable, which is directed against the Pharisees, whose righteousness for the most part was not such, but feigned and hypocritical? But on the other side, if it is not real, how does this fall in with the course of the history, according to which the elder brother *had* remained ever in his father's house, or with his uncontradicted assertion concerning his own continued obedience, or with the meed of approbation, the assurances of favour, which he receives from his father's lips?

Each determination of the question is embarrassed with difficulties; and that certainly with considerable, though perhaps not with the greatest, which is adopted by Jerome,† by Theophylact, and by others, namely, that by the elder son the Pharisees are signified, whose righteousness was feigned and hypocritical;—that his assertions concerning his own continued obedience are suffered to pass uncontradicted, because,

\* Jerome's reply to Damasus (*Ep.* 21), which has been more than once referred to, is very remarkable, as showing how the difficulties which press upon this part of the parable were felt quite as strongly in the Church in his time as now. It was just this question which Damasus had asked: *Nunquid personæ justi tam inmanis invidia poterit coaptari?* And Theophylact calls the question about the elder son, τὸ πολυθρύλλητον ζήτημα.

† Christ, he says, portrays the Pharisees, non quales erant, sed quales esse debuerant. Theophylact calls them καθ' ὑπόθεσιν δίκαιοι.

even granting them to be true, the case would not be altered, the father arguing with him *e concessio* :\* “Be it so, that is not the subject now in hand ; allowing your obedience to have been without interruption, your works always to have been well-pleasing in my sight, yet ought you in love to rejoice that your brother has returned to us once more, and to be well pleased at this abounding gladness with which he is welcomed home.” At the same time there seems a possible middle course, which shall escape the embarrassments undoubtedly perplexing this as well as the opposite scheme of interpretation ; which is, that we see in those whom the elder brother represents, a low, but not altogether false, form of legal righteousness. He is one who has been kept by the law from gross offences ; he has been occupied, though in a servile spirit, in the works of that law. For so, no doubt, had it been with not a few of the Pharisees. Many were hypocrites ; but also many of them sincerely, though in much blindness of heart, followers after righteousness (Rom. x. 1, 2). The righteousness indeed was of a low sort,† in the strivings after which, being mostly external, they attained to no deep self-acquaintance, no knowledge of the plague of their own hearts such as should render them mild and merciful to others, no insight into the breadth of that law which they professed to keep, such as should thoroughly abase them before God. Of this class may have been some of the murmurers here ; persons not utterly to be rejected, nor the good in them to be utterly denied ; but who had need rather to be shown what was faulty, deficient, narrow, and loveless in their service ;—to be invited to renounce their servile for a filial spirit, and to enter into the nobler liberties of that Church and kingdom which Christ was establishing upon earth. And in this sense we must then understand the father’s invitation to the elder son to come in. Hitherto he had been labouring “*in the field*,”‡ but now he is

\* Jerome : Non confirmavit vera esse quæ dixerat filius, sed irascentem aliâ ratione compescuit

† Salmeron . Intellegamus veros justos, sed mediocres.

‡ Ambrose : Terrenis operibus occupatus, ignorans quæ sunt

invited to a festival. They whose work for God had hitherto been servile, the hard taskwork of the law, are invited now to enter into the joy of the Lord, the freedom of the Spirit.\* This part of the parable will then be as much a preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom to the legalist, as the earlier part of it had been to the gross sinner;—as love to the one spoke there, so love to the other here.

The elder son's reply to the father's invitation (ver. 29, 30), and especially those words, "*yet thou never gavest me a kid,*" show too plainly that he whom that son represents is ignorant of the nature of that kingdom to which he is invited. He is looking for certain definite rewards of his obedience, to the getting of something *from* God, in preference to possessing all things *in* God.† Instead of feeling it his true reward, that he had been ever with his father, he rather would plead this as establishing his claim to some other reward.‡ In the father's reply, "*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine,*" we must be careful that we place the emphasis on the right word, for without this we shall entirely miss the meaning. It is not, "*Son, thou art ever with me,*" as though the contrast was drawn between him and the younger son who for so long had *not* been with his father; but we should read rather, "*Son, thou art ever with me,*" setting the emphasis on the concluding words. "What need to talk of other friends? thou art ever with a better than them all, with myself. Why shouldst thou have expected a kid, when *all that I have is thine?*" To make the first clause of the sentence an honourable recognition of his past obedience, or the second a promise that he "shall inherit all things," is an entire missing and marring of the whole. Rather in the first

Spiritus Dei. But Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. cxxxviii.*) rather more favourably: Significat sanctos in lege facientes opera et præcepta legis.

\* Augustine: Ad perfruitionem potioris atque jocundioris exultationis invitat.

† Augustine: Non dicit pater, Omnia possides, sed, Omnia mea tua sunt.

‡ He should have felt, in Bernard's words: Ipse retributor, ipse retributio nostra, nec aliud jam quam ipsum expectamus ab ipso.

words lies the keenest, though at the same time the most loving, rebuke: "Am not I to thee more than all besides?" in the second the most earnest warning: "What is mine is thine, if only thou wilt so regard it; what can I do for thee, if thy fellowship in my things fails to make thee feel rich?" And how wonderfully do these last words, "*All that I have is thine*," declare to us the true nature of the rewards of the kingdom. The elder son, no doubt, had thought that what was given to his brother was taken from him; but in the free kingdom of love one has not less, because another has more; but all is possessed by each. The fountain of God's grace is not as a little scanty spring in the desert, round which thirsty travellers need strive and struggle, muddying the waters with their feet, pushing one another away, lest those waters be drawn dry by others before they come to partake of them themselves; but a mighty inexhaustible river, on the banks of which all may stand, and where none need grudge lest, if others drink largely and freely, there will not enough remain for themselves. To each of his true servants and children the Lord says, as the father did to his elder son, "*All that I have is thine*."\* If any then is straitened, and counts that he has not enough, he is straitened, as the elder son here, not in God, but in himself, and in his own narrow and grudging heart.

There is abundant reason why nothing should be said concerning the issue of the father's attempt to remove the sullen dissatisfaction of his son. That could not yet be told, even as it was yet uncertain whether the scribes and Pharisees might not, as well as the publicans and harlots, be won to repentance; which indeed, though of another kind and for other sins, they needed quite as much as did those. The Lord, not distinctly declaring that the elder son sullenly refused to *the last* to enter in, or that he was finally excluded for his

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\* Augustine, on these words, says: Sic enim perfectis et purgatis ac jam immortalibus filiis habentur omnia, ut sint omnium singula, et omnia singulorum: ut enim cupiditas nihil sine angustia, ita nihil cum angustia caritas tenet.

contumacy, intimated to these, that as yet the kingdom of God was not closed against them; that they too, as well as the publicans and sinners, were invited and summoned to leave their low, poor, and formal service, "the elements of the world" (Gal. iv. 3), and to enter into the glorious liberties of the kingdom of Christ; that they too were guests invited to that spiritual festival wherein He should manifest his glory, changing the weak and watery elements of that old dispensation into the generous and gladdening wine of the new (John ii. 1-11).

It is impossible indeed to read the parable without an ominous presentiment that the elder brother does refuse to the end, and after his father's remonstrances, to go in. In this sense the parable was fearfully fulfilled, and on the largest scale, when the Jews in the apostolic age would take no part in the great festival of reconciliation with which the Gentile world's reception into the kingdom of heaven was being celebrated. How may we read all through the Acts (xiii. 45; xiv. 19; xvii. 5, 13; xviii. 12) a commentary on this statement, "*he would not go in,*" and that, because his brother was received so freely with music and with dancing. If he too had been submitted first to a painful apprenticeship of the law, if he too had been sent to work in the field, it might have been another thing (Acts xv. 1). But that he should be thus made free of the kingdom of God, and brought into the festival at once—this was more than the elder brother could bear. Numbers stayed openly and sullenly without. Others, as the Ebionites, only pretended to go in, or went in under a mistaken supposition that it should be as in their narrow hearts they desired (Gal. ii. 12-14), and, discovering their error, presently withdrew themselves again.\* Yet while all this is true, we Gentiles must not forget that the whole matter will be reversed at the end of the present dispensation,

\* Augustine (*Serm. inedd.*): Irascitur frater major . . . Stomachati sunt Judæi venire gentes de tanto compendio, nullis impositis oneribus legis, non dolore circumcisionis carnalis, in peccato accipere baptismum salutarem.



and the parts so shifted, that it will be we who then shall be in danger of playing the part of the elder brother; the which we shall do, if we grudge at the largeness of the grace bestowed upon the Jew, who is now the prodigal, feeding upon husks, far away from his heavenly Father's house\* (Hos. iii. 4, 5).

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\* Cajetan's view of the elder brother and his anger is very interesting, and I am not aware that any interpreter, except indeed Jerome, and he but slightly, has brought it forward. He speaks first of the joy and consolation which the penitent sinner often finds at his first return unto God, "*the music and dancing*,"—for him all the glories of the Gospel have the freshness of novelty, and, for a while, an overpowering gladness, which they cannot have for one who has ever continued in the ways of the Lord. The joy of the latter ~~has~~ indeed been infinitely greater than this one burst of gladness, but it has been spread over a far larger space of time:—so that seeing the exultation of the newly converted, he may be tempted for a moment to ask, with a transient feeling of discontent, why to him also is not given this burst of exulting joy? why for him the fatted calf has been never slain?—But the answer is, because he has been ever with his father, because his father's possessions are, and have been always, his. His joy therefore is soberer and more solid,—not the suddenly swelling mountain cataract, but the deep, though smooth and silent, river: and what is given to the other, is given to him just because he is a beginner. And Cajetan concludes his very interesting explanation of the whole parable with these words: *Adverte hic, prudens lector, Deum quandoque noviter pœnitentes afficere magnâ consolatione interni gaudii, donec firmentur in viâ Dei; . . . hæc autem non sunt majoris perfectionis fructus, sed deliciæ quædam seu blanditiæ cœlestis Patris, quæ perfectionibus multis negantur.* This view was a very favourite one with the Mystics, who observed how in the festivals the first and eighth days, that is, their beginnings and their glorious consummations, were commonly the days of chiefest gladness; and they compare these joys to sugared dainties, with which those who are as it were children in spiritual things are first allured into Christ's school. Volmar (*De Spirit. Perfect*) uses a like image: *Hæc itaque devotionis gratia infantibus dari solet, ut ad bona opera per eam incitentur; quemadmodum venaticis canibus in principio solet gustus ferarum captarum præberi, ut ad venandum eo fortius insistant.*—Before leaving this parable, I would just take notice of a very interesting allegory, called, but incorrectly, a parable, and founded upon this, which appears among the works of St. Bernard, but is by his Benedictine editors (vol. i. p. 1251) attributed to some other author.

## PARABLE XXV.

### THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE xvi. 1-9.

THIS parable, whose difficulties no one, who has seriously considered, can underrate,—difficulties which Cajetan found so great that he gave up the matter in despair, affirming a solution impossible,—has been the subject of manifold, and those the most opposite, interpretations. I cannot doubt, however, that many interpreters have, if I may so say, “over-run their game,” and that we have here simply a parable of Christian prudence,—Christ exhorting us to use the world and the world’s goods, so to speak, *against* itself, and *for* God. I shall not attempt to render a complete account of all the interpretations to which it has been submitted; since that would be an endless task;\* but as I go through the parable shall note what parts of it those interpreters, who have the best right to be heard, have considered its key-words, and the meanings which they have made the whole to render up, noting at the same time what seem the weak and unsatisfactory points in those explanations which I shall reject.

The Lord, having finished the parable of the Prodigal Son, did not break off the conversation, but,—it is probable, after a short pause, which He allowed that his words might sink down into the hearts of his hearers,—resumed; not now, however, addressing his words any more to the gainsayers and opposers, but to those who heard Him gladly and willingly, to “*his disciples*,” as we are (ver. 1) expressly told. We must

\* Schreiter, in a work entirely devoted to this parable (*Explic. Parab. de Improb. Econ. Descriptio*; Lips. 1803), gives an appalling list of explanations offered, and a brief analysis and judgment of them all; but I have not been able to derive much assistance from the book.

not by these "*his disciples*" understand exclusively the twelve (see Luke vi. 13); nor yet on the other hand make them to include the multitude, in a certain degree well affected to the doctrine and person of Christ, yet at the same time hanging loosely upon Him,—following Him from place to place, but as yet not having joined themselves without reserve to Him as their master and lord. They rather are the body of those who had attached themselves to Him to be taught of Him, whom his word had found out in the deep of their spirits, and who, having left the world's service, had decidedly passed over into the ranks of his people. To them, to the "*disciples*" so understood, the parable was addressed; for them too it was meant; since it is scarcely probable, as some would have it, that the Lord was speaking *to* them, but *at* the Pharisees. These last, it is true, were *also hearers* of the Lord's words (ver. 14), but the very mention of them as such excludes them from being the persons to whom it was primarily addressed. Christ may have intended,—it would seem most likely He did intend,—some of his shafts to glance off upon them, while yet it was not at them that they were originally aimed. We shall presently see that in relation to, at least, one of the expositions which are offered, it will be important to have fixed in our minds for whom above all the parable was meant.

"*There was a certain rich man, which had a steward,*"—not a land-bailiff\* merely, but a ruler over all his goods, such

\* And therefore not villicus, which the Vulgate has, nor yet dispensator, which is a cashier. The inaccuracy of the first expression is noted and corrected by Jerome (*Ep.* 121, qu. 6), who at the same time gives a good account of what were the steward's duties: Villicus propriæ villæ gubernator est, unde nomen accepit. Οἰκονόμος autem tam pecuniæ quam frugum, et omnium quæ dominus possidet, dispensator. See, too, *Ad Eustoch. Ep.* xxii. 35; and for much information on the subject, Mr. GRESWELL'S *Exp. of the Par.* vol. iv. p. 3, and BECKER'S *Charikles*, vol. ii. p. 37. Procurator would be the best translation (see BECKER'S *Gallus*, vol. i. p. 109). In the pictures lately discovered in the Egyptian tombs, the steward is seen often with all his writing-materials, taking an exact note of the amount of the harvest, before it is stored in the granaries (HENGSTENBERG'S *Bücher Moses und Ägypten*, p. 23); which is something to the point here, as the same person would naturally have the oversight of the outgoings as well.

as was Eliezer in the house of Abraham (Gen. xxiv. 2-12), and Joseph in the house of Potiphar (Gen. xxxix. 4). It was one of the main duties of such a steward to dispense their portions of food to the different members of the household (Luke xii. 42), to give the servants or slaves their portion in due season,—a duty sometimes undertaken by the diligent mistress of a house (Prov. xxxi. 15). “*And the same was accused unto him that he had wasted\* his goods;*” not, we may certainly conclude, through mere carelessness, but himself deriving an unrighteous gain from the waste and injury which his master’s property endured in his hands. This of the lord needing that his steward’s ill conduct should reach his ears through a third party, belongs to the earthly setting forth of the truth; yet it finds its parallel, Gen. xviii. 30, 31. There is not the slightest ground for supposing, as some have done, that the steward was falsely and calumniously accused. It lies not in the word, for the same is used Dan. iii. 8, where it is said that certain Chaldæans came near and *accused* the Jews; yet it was not *falsely* that they accused them of having refused to worship the golden image; nor had Daniel himself been calumniously accused (vi. 24) of having knelt and prayed, and given thanks before his God;† *malignantly* it might be, and in each case was, and so much lies in the word, but not falsely. No support then is to be found in this word for their view, who would in a greater or less measure clear the character of the steward.‡ Indeed his own words (ver. 3) contain

\* There seems no reason why we should have shared the error of the Vulgate, *quasi dissipasset*, when it is plain from the present (ὥς διασκοπρίζων) of the original, that it is no past, but an actual and present, unfaithfulness to his trust with which he is charged.

† Here also the same word (διαβάλλω) is used in the Septuagint by which St. Luke here expresses the accusation against the steward. Cf. 2 Macc. iii. 11. He was, as the Vulgate has it, *diffamatus*, but not, at least in our present use of the word, *defamed*.

‡ As for instance Schleiermacher, who says: “The right view of this parable is to be sure very much perverted, if the steward, who, after all, has not committed any breach of trust (?) on his own account, nor was charged with it, is notwithstanding to be termed *οἰκον. r. ἀδικίας*, and we will not make up our minds to leave *οικονόμος* with-

an implicit acknowledgment of his guilt: he evidently renounces at once any hope of clearing himself of the charge; and his after-conduct, his scheme for helping himself out of his difficulties, will warrant no other conclusion, but that the accusation, though it might have been brought against him by some enemy and from malicious motives, yet was one with most entire foundation in the truth.

Hereupon his lord *"called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee?"* This is not examination, but rather the expostulation of indignant surprise,—*"of thee,\** whom I had trusted so far, to whom I had committed so much: *Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."* Those who, like Anselm, see in the parable the history of the rise and progress and fruits of repentance, lay much stress upon these words, *"How is it that I hear this of thee?"* This remonstrance is for them the voice of God speaking to the sinner, and convincing him of sin, bringing home to his conscience that he has had a stewardship, and has been abusing it; and the threat, *"Thou mayest*

out an epithet and to refer this ἀδικίας to ἐπὶνεῖν [against this construction see WINLR'S *Grammatik*, p. 185]: and if the master who treats his servant in so very arbitrary a way, and discharges him, without inquiry, upon a secret information, and who besides discovers no higher measure by which he judges of human actions than prudence, if this character is all along considered a blameless man" But it is very difficult to see what Schleiermacher would gain for his scheme by the altered construction. *"The lord praised the steward for his injustice,"* comes pretty nearly to the same thing as, *"The lord praised the unjust steward,"* and with such analogous Hebrew phrases as *μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, κριτῆς τῆς ἀδικίας* (Luke xviii. 6), *ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησμονῆς* (Jam. i. 25), he will scarcely persuade that the ordinary and natural collocation of the words is to be abandoned, even to help out his marvellous interpretation of the parable, according to which the rich householder is the Romans, the steward the publicans, and the debtors the Jewish people; the lesson it contains being, "If the publicans show themselves mild and indulgent towards their nation, the Romans will in their hearts praise them, and they who have now lost all favour with their countrymen will by them be favourably received." But in what sense, it may be asked, could a coming into favour with the Jewish people, themselves no longer in favour with God, be termed a reception into everlasting habitations?

\* Wetstein: *Mirantis; de te! quem procuratorem constitui.*

*be no longer steward,*" is in like manner a bringing home to him, by sickness or by some other means, that he will soon be removed from his earthly stewardship, and have to render an account. He feels that he cannot answer God one thing in a thousand, and that when once he is thus removed, there will be no help for him: he cannot dig, for the night will have come in which no man can work; and he will be ashamed to beg for that mercy, which he knows will then be refused. Consistently with this view, they see in the lowering of the bills, not a further and crowning act of unrighteousness on his part, but the first act of his righteousness, the dealing of one who now seeks, while he has time, to do good with that which is committed to him, to lay out the things in his power not with merely selfish aims, but in acts of charity and kindness, to scatter for God rather than for himself, to heap up in heaven and not on earth. The dishonesty of the act they get over, either by giving this lowering of the bills altogether a mystical meaning, and so refusing to contemplate it in the letter at all, or in a way of which we shall presently have to take notice. He is still called, they say, the "*unjust*" steward (ver. 8), not because he remains such, but because of his former unrighteousness; he bears that name for the encouragement of penitents. It is as much as to say, Though he had been this unrighteous ungodly man beforetime, he yet obtained now praise and commendation from his lord. He retained the title, as did Matthew that of "the publican" (Matt. x. 3), even after he had become an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ,\* in perpetual remembrance of the grace of God which had found

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\* So the author of a sermon in the Bened. edit. of St. Bernard (vol. ii. p. 714), who gives this as the sum of the parable: *Multâ laude est dignus, qui relicto errore pistinæ conversationis, diviti Deo satisfaciens redit ad gratiam*; and Anselm (*Hom.* 12), who, however, sees in the steward only an unfaithful ruler in the Church, not every man to whom a dispensation has been committed, which he has been abusing;—he says: *Laudari a domino meruit; et nos ergo laudemus eum, . . . nec eum in aliquo, priusquam correctus est, audeamus reprehendere, ut hæc putemus in his quæ erga debitores egit domino fraudem fecisse, sed potius credamus eum in his lucra domini sui prudenti consilio quæsisse, et ejus voluntatem implêsse.*

him in that mean employment, and out of that had raised him to so great a dignity; as in like manner we have Zenas *the lawyer* (Tit. iii. 13); Rahab *the harlot* (Heb. xi. 31); Simon *the leper* (Matt. xxvi. 6); not that such they were now, but that such they once had been. Against all this it may be replied that there is nothing in the man's counsels with himself that ~~marks~~ the smallest change of mind, the slightest repentance,—no recognition of guilt, no acknowledgment of a trust abused, no desire expressed henceforward to be found faithful, but only an utterance of selfish anxiety concerning his future lot, of fear lest poverty and distress may come upon him; and the explanation, however ingenious, of his being still characterized (ver. 8) as the “*unjust*” steward, is quite unsatisfactory; neither “*publican*” nor “*lawyer*” conveyed of necessity a sentence of moral reprobation.

But now follow his counsels with himself; and first his confession of an utter inability any where to find help: his past softness of life has unfitted him for labour: his pride forbids him to beg (Ecclus. xl. 28). Yet this helplessness endures not long; he knows what he will do; and has rapidly conceived a plan whereby to make provision against that time of need and destitution which is now so near at hand. If his determination is not honest, it is at any rate promptly taken; and this is part, no doubt, of the skill for which he gets credit,—that he was not brought to a nonplus, but quickly found a way of escape from his distresses. “*I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship,\* they may receive me into their houses,*” as one from whom they have received kindnesses, and who, therefore, may trust to find hospitable entertainment among them,—a miserable prospect, as the son of Sirach declares (xxix. 22-28), yet better than utter destitution and want.

Hereupon follows the collusion between him and his lord's debtors. They owed, it seems, to the householder,—at least

\* In the Vulgate: *Amotus a villicatione*; but Tertullian in far happier Latin: *ab actu summotus*.

the two whose 'cases' are instanced, and who are evidently brought forward as representatives of many more,—just as but *three* servants are named out of the ten (Luke xix. 13), to whom pounds had been intrusted,—the one a hundred measures of oil, and the other a hundred measures of wheat. It is not likely that they were tenants of his, who paid their rents in kind, which rents were now by the steward lowered, and the leases tampered with; the name "*debtor*" seems not to point that way. Again, the enormous amount\* of the oil and the wheat, both of them costly articles (see Prov. xxi. 17), makes it equally unlikely that these "*debtors*" were poorer neighbours or dependents, whom the rich householder had supplied with means of living in the shape of food,—not, however, as a gift, but as a loan, taking from them an acknowledgment, and meaning to be repaid, when they had the ability. Rather we might assume the foregoing transactions by which these men came into the relation of debtors to the rich man, to have been of this kind,—that he, having large possessions, and therefore large incomings from the fruits of the earth, had sold, through his steward, a portion of such upon credit to these debtors,—merchants, or other factors,—and they had not as yet made their payments. They had given, however, their bills, or notes of hand, acknowledging the amount which they had received, in which amount they owned themselves to stand indebted to him. These, which had remained in the steward's keeping, he now returns to them,—"*Take thy bill*,"†—bidding them to alter them, or to substitute others in their room, in

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\* The word "*measure*" in our translation, which may be a small or a large quantity, fails to intimate this. Better Tyndal and Cranmer, who give it, "*tuns* of oil" (the Rhemish, pipes), and "*quarters* of wheat." It is exactly this quantity, one hundred *cors* of wheat, which, in one of the apocryphal gospels, where every thing is on a gigantic scale, as with those whose only notion of greatness is size, the child Jesus received in return for a single grain of wheat which he had planted in the ground (THILO's *Cod. Apocryph.* p. 302)

† Γράμμα=χειρόγραφον (Col. ii. 14)=γραμματεῖον χρέους ὁμολογητικόν, by the Vulgate happily translated, *cautio*. See the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. Interest of money, p. 524



which they confess themselves to have received much smaller amounts of oil and wheat than was actually the case, and consequently to be so much less in the rich man's debt than they truly were. To one debtor he remits half, to another the fifth, of his debt; by these different proportions teaching us, say those who justify his conduct, and even some who do not, that charity is not to be a blind profuseness, exhibited without respect of the needs, greater or smaller, of those who are its objects, but ever to be exercised with consideration and discretion,\*—that the hand is to be opened to some more widely than to others.

In this lowering of the bills, Vitringa† finds the key of the parable, and proposes the following interpretation, which deserves to be recorded, if for nothing else, yet for its exceeding ingenuity. The rich man is God, the steward the Pharisees, or generally the ecclesiastical leaders of the people, to whom was committed a stewardship of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But they were accused by the prophets, as by Ezek. xxxiv. 2, Mal. ii. 8, and lastly by Christ Himself, that they neglected their stewardship, used the power committed to them, not for the glory of God, but for purposes of self-exaltation and honour,—that they “*wasted his goods.*” They feel the justice of this accusation, and that they are not in the grace of their Lord, and only outwardly belong to his kingdom. Therefore they now seek to make themselves friends of others, of the debtors of their Lord, of sinful men; and this they do, acting as though they still possessed authority in the things of his kingdom. And the device by which they seek to make these friends is, by lowering the standard of righteousness and obedience, inventing convenient glosses for the evading of the strictness of God's law, allowing men to say, “It is a gift” (Matt. xv. 5), suffering them to put away their wives on any

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\* Thus Gregory the Great, who quotes from Gen. iv.: Si recte offeras, et non recte divides, peccasti.

† *Erklär. d. Parab* p. 921, seq. This seems to have been the standing interpretation of the Cocceian school, for see DEYLING's *Obes. Sac.* vol. v. p. 335

slight excuse (Luke xvi. 18), and by various devices making slack the law of God (Matt. xxiii. 16); by "indulgences" in fact—thus obtaining for themselves favour and an interest with men, and still keeping, although God's grace was withdrawn from them, their hold on men, and retaining their advantages, their honours, and their peculiar privileges. This interpretation has one attraction, that it gives a distinct meaning to the lowering of the bills,—"*Write fifty,*" "*Write fourscore,*"—which very few others do. The moral will then be no other than is commonly and rightly drawn from the parable; "Be prudent as are these children of the present world, but provide for yourselves not temporary friends, but everlasting habitations: they use heavenly things for earthly objects; but do you reverse the case, and show how earthly things may be used for heavenly."\*

Connected with this view is that of the writer of an elaborate article in a modern German Review.† He conceives the

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\* With the interpretation of these words as being a lowering of the standard of obedience very nearly agrees the use of the parable which is made in the *Liber S Joannis Apocryphus*, a religious book of the Albigenses, republished in THULO's *Codex Apocryphus*, p. 884, seq. It is with the very question which the steward here puts to the debtors, "*How much owest thou unto my lord?*" and with the bidding, "*Write fifty,*" "*Write fourscore,*" that Satan is introduced as tempting and seducing the inferior angels (*blandiendo angelos invisibilis Patris*). The very ingenious exposition of the parable by Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia, a cotemporary of St. Ambrose, is in the same line. He says: *Villicus iniquitatis Diabolus intelligendus est, qui in seculo relictus est, ut immunitatem [immanitatem?] ejus villici fugientes ad pietatem Dei suppliciter curramus. Hic dissipat facultates Domini, quando in nos grassatur, qui portio Domini sumus. Hic excogitat quomodo valeat debitores Domini, h.e. peccatis involutos non solum aperto prælio persequi, sed sub obtentu fallacis benevolentiae, blandâ fraude decipere, quo magis eum in domos suas falsâ benignitate seducti recipiant, cum ipso in æternum judicandi. . . . Hic debita conservorum suorum relaxare se falso promittit, dum vel in fide vel in opere peccantibus variam pollicetur indulgentiam . . . Laudat [Salvator] astutiam villici minaciter simul et providenter. Minaciter quidem, cum vocabulo iniquitatis pessimam Diaboli prudentiam condemnat: providenter autem, dum contra argumentorum ejus consilia discipulos audientes confirmat, ut omni cautelâ atque prudentiâ tam callido atque prudenti inimico repugnent.*

† Zyro, in the *Theol. Stud. u. Krit.* for 1831, p. 776. He had been,

parable to have been meant for the scribes and Pharisees—only that he makes it to contain counsel for them,—the unjust steward is set forth for them to copy; while Vitringa made it to contain a condemnation of them. They were the ministers of a dispensation which was now coming to a close; and when in its room the kingdom of Christ was set up, then their much-abused stewardship would be taken away from them. The parable exhorts them, during that little while intervening between the announcement and actual execution of this purpose of God's, to cultivate that spirit which alone would give them an entrance "*into everlasting habitations*," into the kingdom not to be moved,—the spirit, that is, which they so much lacked, of mildness and love and meekness toward all men, their fellow-sinners. This spirit and the works which it would prompt, he affirms, are fitly set forth under the image of a remission of debts\*—and those, debts due to another, since it is against God that primarily every sin is committed. Such a spirit as this, of love and gentleness toward all men, flows out of the recognition of our own guilt, which recognition the writer finds in the absence on the steward's part of all attempts to justify or excuse himself. The same temper which would prompt them to these works of love and grace would fit them also for an entrance into the everlasting habitations, the coming kingdom, which, unlike that dispensation now ready to vanish away, should endure for ever. But how, it may be urged,

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however, though he seems not to know it, long ago anticipated by Salmeron (*Serm in Evang Par.* p. 231): Quia enim scribæ et Pharisei cum lege et sacerdotio in promptu erant, ut deficerent . . . hortatur Dominus ut dent operam, ne austere cum peccatoribus procedant, . . . ut ita sibi præparent amicos, qui eos in Evangelium recipiant.

\* Weisse (*Evang. Gesch.* vol. ii. p. 162, seq.) brings forward, as though it were a great discovery of his own, and all that was wanted for the easy explanation of the parable, this view, that the lowering of the bills is the image here under which, not acts of bounty and love with the temporal mammon, but the spiritual act of the forgiveness of sins, is represented. He owns, however, that he cannot bring this into agreement with ver. 9, "Make to yourselves friends of the *mammon of unrighteousness*," and the words in italics he therefore includes in brackets, being "convinced that Jesus never spoke them"!

shall this interpretation be reconciled with the words, "He said also *unto his disciples*," with which the Evangelist introduced the parable? \* it will then plainly be addressed not to them, but to the scribes and Pharisees.

But to return ;—with these new acts of unrighteousness this child of the present world filled up the short interval between his threatened and his actual dismissal from his office. It is not said that he attempted to conceal the fraudulent arrangement which he was making, or that he called his lord's debtors together *secretly*,—whether it was that he trusted they would keep counsel, being held together by a common interest and by the bands of a common iniquity,—or whether he thus falsified the accounts, fearing neither God nor man, careless whether the transaction were blown abroad or not ; as being now a desperate man, who had no character to lose, and who was determined to brave the matter, confident that there would be no redress for his lord, when the written documents testified against him. This latter seems to me the most probable supposition—that the thing was done openly and in the face of day,† and that the arrangement was such as, from some

\* Not very unlike this is the explanation given by Tertullian (*De Fugâ in Persec* 13), only that he makes the exhortation to be addressed to the entire Jewish people, and not to the spiritual chiefs of the nation alone: *Facite autem vobis amicos de mammonâ, quomodo intelligendum sit parabola præmissa doceat, ad populum Judaicum dicta, qui commissam sibi rationem Domini cum male administrâset, deberet de mammonâ hominibus, quod nos eramus, amicos sibi potius prospicere quam inimicos, et relevare nos a debitis peccatorum, quibus Deo detinebamur, si nobis de dominicâ ratione conferrent, ut cum cœpisset ab hujus deficere gratiâ, ad nostram fidem refugientes reciperentur in tabernacula æternâ.*

† His words to the debtors, "Sit down *quickly* and write," may appear to some characteristic of a man who wished to huddle over the matter as fast as possible, for fear of discovery ;—so Bengel explains them: *Ταχέως*, iaptim, furtim ; and Maldonatus: *Quod dicit cito*, hominis mihi fraudulentum et male agentis esse videtur, timentis ne in scelere deprehendatur, ne quis, dum adulterantur litteræ, superveniat. But there is another fair explanation, that they are the words of a man who feels that what is to be done, must be done at once—that today he has means to help himself, while tomorrow they will have passed from his hands. The transaction was evidently not with the

cause or other, being once completed, could not be broken, but must be permitted to stand. Were it meant to have been a secret transaction, the lord's discovery of the fraud would hardly have been passed over, and the steward would scarcely have obtained for a contrivance which proved so clumsy that it was presently seen through and detected, even the limited praise which he does obtain as a skilful adapter of his means to his ends. Least of all would he have obtained such praise, if it had depended merely on the forbearance of his master, in the case of discovery being made, which the event proved must have been regarded as probable from the beginning, whether the arrangement should be allowed to stand good or not. Such forbearance could not have been counted on, even though the words\* of the lord should lead us in the present instance to assume that he did allow the steward to reap the full benefits which he hoped from his dishonest scheming.

But whether the arrangement was a clandestine one or not, that it was a fraudulent one seems beyond a doubt; such, on the face of it, it is, and any attempt to mitigate or explain away its dishonesty is hopeless.† It may be, and by some

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debtors one by one, that is, with each apart from and unknown to the other, as is slightly but sufficiently indicated by the *οὐ δέ* ("And thou") with which the steward begins his address to the second.

\* Jensen, however, who has a very interesting essay on this parable (*Theol. Stud. u. Krit.* 1829, p. 699), sees a spiritual significance in the householder's forbearing to break the arrangement—he says. "That which is related of the master,—how he regards the dealing of the steward,—does not blame it, nor stand to his rights,—seems to me to be the setting forth of the grace of God, through which, instead of entering into judgment with sinful men, He rather rewards the good in them, which, according to strict right, could not even attain to secure them from punishment. For he leaves the steward to enjoy the fruit of his device; and since, after what has been said above, it cannot be conveniently supposed that he had no right to demand a strict reckoning in the matter, it only remains to consider this conduct as a voluntary forbearance on his part."

† One might say absurd, but that it has been done with so much ability by Schulz in an instructive little treatise (*ub. d. Parabel von Verwalter*, Breslau, 1821), as to redeem it from such a charge. The ancient *οἰκονόμος*, he says, was one with far greater liberty of action, more uncontrolled freedom in the administration of the things com-

indeed has been said, that this dishonesty of the transaction is not of the essence of the parable, but an inconvenience arising from the inadequacy of earthly relationships to set forth divine. They must fail somewhere, and this is the weak side of the earthly relation between a steward and his lord, which renders it not altogether a perfect type of the relation existing between men and God,—that in the latter case, to use Hammond's words, "the man hath liberty to use the wealth put into his hands so as may be most (not only for his master's, but also) for his own advantage, namely, to his endless reward in heaven, which, though it were an injustice and falseness in a servant here on earth, who is altogether to consider his master's profit, not his own, yet it is our duty and that which by the will and command of God we are obliged to do, in the execution of that steward's office which the rich man holds under God: and is the only thing commended to us in this parable; which is so far from denominating him that makes this advantage of the treasure committed to him an unjust or unrighteous steward in the application, that it denominates him *faithful* (πιστός) in the latter part of the parable, and him only *false* (ἄδικος) that doth it not." In worldly things there is not, and there never can be, such absolute identity of interests between a master and a servant, that a servant dealing wholly with reference to his own interests, would at the same time forward in the best manner his lord's. But our interests as servants of a heavenly Lord, that is, our true interests, absolutely coincide in all things with his; so that when we administer the things committed to us

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mitted to him, than any to whom we should in modern times apply the title of *steward*, and the sum of his statement seems this (though the comparison is not his), that his conduct at this latest moment of his stewardship, however merely selfish it might be, yet was no more dishonest than it would be dishonest on the part of the minister of a kingdom, who had hitherto been oppressing the people under him, and administering the affairs of the kingdom for his own interests and pleasures, yet now, when about to be removed from his place of authority, to seek to win the people's love and a place in their hearts, by remitting or lowering the heavy dues and taxes with which before he had burdened them.

for Him, then we lay them out also for ourselves, and when for ourselves, for our lasting and eternal gain, then also for Him.

“*And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.*” Every one who is able to judge of the construction of the original, will at once acknowledge that it is the lord *of the steward*, he who has twice before in the parable been called by this name (ver. 3, 5), that is here meant, and not *our* Lord, who does not begin to speak directly in his own person till ver. 9, the intermediate verse being the point of transition from the narration to the direct exhortation.\* The attempt to substitute “*cunningly*” for the “*wisely*” of our translation, and so by limiting and lowering the commendation given, to evade the moral difficulty of the passage, cannot altogether be borne out by an appeal to the original. “*Wisely*” may not be the happiest word that could have been selected, and certainly is not, since wisdom is never in Scripture disconnected from moral goodness.† But if more commendation is implied in “*wisely*” than the original warrants, in “*cunningly*” there would be less; “*prudently*” is clearly the word that should have been chosen, and so in Wiclif’s translation it was, though the word has disappeared from all our subsequent versions.

But concerning the praise itself, which cannot be explained away as though it were mere admiration of the man’s cunning, it is true that none but a mere malignant, such as the apostate

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\* So Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. lvi. 2*): *Cor ejus laudavit dominus ejus*. Compare Luke xii. 42; xiv. 23, where in like manner ὁ κύριος, without further qualification, is used of an earthly lord.

† In Plato’s words, Πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς, πανουργία οὐ σοφία φαίνεται. Rather φρόνιμος is a middle term, not bringing out prominently the moral characteristics, either good or evil, of the action to which it is applied, but recognizing in it a skilful adaptation of the means to the end—affirming nothing in the way of moral approbation or disapprobation either of means or end, but leaving their worth to be determined by other considerations. If the φρόνιμος were the cunning, we should find it opposed to the ἄκακος, the simple; but we do find it actually opposed to the μωρός (Matt vii. 24, 26; xxv. 2). The φρόνησις stands in the same relation to the σύνεσις (understanding) as the σοφία does to the νοῦς (reason).

Julian, would make here a charge against the morality of the Scripture ; or pretend, as he does, to believe that Jesus meant to commend an unrighteous action, and propose it, *in its unrighteousness*, as a model for imitation. Yet at the same time few will deny that the praise has something perplexing in it ; though rather from the liability of the passage to abuse, unguarded as at first sight it appears, though it is not really so (for see ver. 11, which should never be disconnected from the parable), than from its not being capable of a fair explanation. The explanation is clearly this : the man's deed has two sides on which it may be contemplated ; one, the side of its dishonesty, upon which it is most blameworthy ; the other, the side of its prudence, its foresight, upon which, if it be not particularly praiseworthy, yet it supplies a sufficient *analogon* to a Christian virtue,—one which *should be* abundantly, but *is* only too weakly found in most followers of Christ,—to make it the ground of an exhortation and rebuke to these ; just as any of the deeds of bold bad men have a side, that is, the side of their boldness and decision, upon which they rebuke the doings of the weak and vacillating good. There are “martyrs of the Devil” who put to shame the saints of God ; and running, as they do, with more alacrity to death than these to life,\* may be proposed to them as objects of their emulation. We may disentangle a bad man's energy from his ambition, so far at least as to contemplate them apart from one another ;

\* Bernard. Martyres Diaboli . . . alacrius currunt ad mortem quam nos ad vitam. There is a striking story of one of the Egyptian eremites which illustrates the matter in hand. Chancing to see a dancing girl, he was moved to tears. Being asked the reason, he replied, “That she should be at such pains to please men in her sinful vocation ; and we in our holy calling use so little diligence to please God.” Compare an incident in the life of Pelagia in LIPOMANNI *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. v. p. 226. Thus too St. Louis when in the East was moved to jealousy by observing the zeal of the Mahomedans in transcribing and diffusing the books which they counted sacred ; and quoting the very words which follow, “*The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light*,” he was henceforward stirred up himself, and more zealously stirred up others, to a more active multiplication of those which would tend to promote a true holiness (Neander, *Kirch. Gesch.* vol. v. p. 583).



and we may then praise the one, and condemn the other. Even so our Lord in the present case disentangles the steward's dishonesty from his prudence: the one, of course, can only have his earnest rebuke; the other may be usefully extolled for the purpose of provoking his people to a like prudence; which yet should be at once a holy prudence, and a prudence employed about things of far higher and more lasting importance.\*

The next verse fully bears out and confirms this view of the Lord's meaning: "*For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*" There is plainly the same objection to the "*wiser*" here that there was to the "*wisely*" of the verse preceding; and as "*prudently*" would have been preferable there, exactly so "*more prudent*" here.† "*The children of this world*" are the Psalmist's "*men of the earth*," those whose portion is here, and who look not beyond; who have adopted the world's maxims, being born of the spirit of this world, and not of God. The phrase occurs but once else in Scripture, and then in our Evangelist (xx. 34), though the term "*children of light*" is common also to St. John (xii. 36) and St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 5; Ephes. v. 8). There is good reason why the faithful should be here called by that rather than by any other name, for thus their doings, which are deeds of light, done in truth and in sincerity, even as they are themselves sons of the day and of the light, are contrasted with the deeds of darkness, the "*hidden things of dishonesty*," wrought by the children of this present world, and of which that one who plays the foremost part in this parable has just given a notable specimen.

The declaration itself has been differently understood, ac-

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\* Clarius: Laudat ingenium, damnat factum. Augustine's explanation (*Quæst. Evang.* ii. 34) is less satisfactory: E contrario dicuntur istæ similitudines, ut intelligamus si laudari potuit ille a domino qui fraudem faciebat, quanto amplius placent Domino Deo, qui secundum ejus præceptum illa opera faciunt. Cf. JEROME, *Ad Algas. Ep.* 121, qu. 6.

† It would seem that exactly thus one of the old Latin versions had astutiores (AUGUSTINE, *Enarr. in Ps.* liii. 2).

cording as the words that are wanting to complete the sentence have been differently supplied. Some complete it thus: "*The children of this world are wiser in their generation,*" namely, in worldly things, "*than the children of light*" are in those same worldly things, that is, Earthly men are more prudent than spiritual men in earthly things; those earthly things are their element, their world, they are more at home in them; they give more thought, they bestow more labour, on these matters, and therefore succeed in them better: though it be true that this is only as owls see better than eagles—in the dark.\* But it is hard to see how a general statement of this kind bears on the parable, which most are agreed urges upon the Christian, not prudence in earthly things by the example of the worldling's prudence in the same, but rather, by the example of the worldling's prudence in these things, urges upon him prudence in heavenly.

Others, then, are nearer the truth, who complete the sentence thus: "*The children of this world are wiser in their generation*" (in worldly matters) "*than the children of light*" in theirs, that is, in heavenly matters; "*the children of light*" being thus rebuked that they give not half the pains to win heaven which the men of this world do to win earth,—that they are less provident in heavenly things than those are in earthly,—that the world is better served by its servants than God is by his. This is the meaning, as it is rightly, though somewhat too vaguely, understood by many; for it is only perfectly seized when we see in the words, "*in their generation,*"—or, as they ought to be translated, "unto" or "towards their generation,"†—an allusion, which has been strangely often

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\* So Cajetan: *Fili hujus sæculi sunt filii lucis prudentiores, non absolute, sed in natione tenebrosâ, sicut noctuæ melius vident in tenebris animalibus diurnis.*

† *Εἰς τὴν γενεάν τὴν αὐτῶν*, which Theophylact explains, *ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ*. but then he has first changed *εἰς τὴν γενεάν* into *ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ*; and as if it were so, it is translated in the Vulgate, in *generatione suâ*. Mr. Greswell has well shown (*Exp. of the Par.* vol. iv. p. 52) how untenable such a translation of the words is, which, indeed, could never have been so much as entertained, except on the principle

missed, to the debtors in the parable. They, the ready accomplices in the steward's fraud, showed themselves to be men of the same generation as he was; they were all of one race, children of the ungodly world; and the Lord's declaration is, that the men of this world make their intercourse with one another more profitable,—obtain more from it,—manage it better for their interests, such as those are, than do the children of light *their* intercourse with one another. For what opportunities, He would imply, are missed by these last, by those among them to whom a share of the earthly mammon is intrusted,—what opportunities of laying up treasure in heaven, of making them friends for the time to come by showing love to the poor saints, or generally of doing offices of kindness to the household of faith, to those of the same generation as themselves,—whom for all this affinity they yet make not, to the extent they might, receivers of benefits, to be returned hereafter a hundredfold into their own bosoms.

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which, in the interpreting of Scripture, has been so often adopted,—that prepositions have no meaning in particular, but may be made to mean anything which it seems convenient for the moment that they should mean. It was convenient to turn *εἰς* into *ἐν*, because it seemed to give some meaning to the words, though not a very satisfactory one. But even the convenience disappears, when we once regard the debtors of the parable as the men of the same *γενεὰ* as the steward, and that here is allusion to them; for all then is easy and plain, and this while no force is applied to the words, and they are allowed their full rights. Storr (*Opusc. Acad.* vol. iii. p. 117) gives rightly the meaning of this verse: Rebus terrenis unice inhiantes (*οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν αἰῶν. τ.*), ut œconomus inductus (v. 1, 3, 4) prudentiâ erga suam familiam (*εἰς τ. γεν. τ. ἑαυτ.*), hoc est, erga idem sentientes, qui pariter ac ipsi sunt *υἱοὶ τῶν αἰῶν τούτων*, erga fratres suos, terrena similiter inhiantes (cf. v. 5-7), antecedere solent lucis ac beatitudinis sempiternæ (v. 9-12) cupidos, qui sæpe non ita (cf. v. 4) student familiam suam (*τ. γεν. τ. ἑαυτ.*), hoc est, lucis item cupidos (æque cum ipsis *υἱοὺς τῶν αἰῶν*), et *εἰς τῶν αἰῶν σκηνάς* perventuros (v. 9), ipsumque communem familiæ Dominum (Matt. xxv. 40) beneficiis sibi devincere, ut igitur tanto magis fuerit opus, admonitionem inculcare quæ sequitur, Luc. xvi. 9. Weisse (*Evangel. Gesch.* vol. ii. p. 161) translates the words *εἰς τ. γεν. τ. ἑαυτ.* rightly, Im Verkehr mit ihres Gleichen; but Neander too vaguely, Von ihrem Standpunkte.—For a masterly disposal of the loose theory that *εἰς* and *ἐν* are ever promiscuously and interchangeably used in the Greek Testament, see WINER'S *Grammatik*, p. 392, seq.

In the following verse the Lord exhorts his disciples not to miss these opportunities ; but after the example of him who bound to himself by benefits the men of his generation, to bind those to themselves who were, with them, "*children of light*," and to make friends of these :\* "*And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*" This "*mammon of unrighteousness*" some explain as wealth unjustly gotten,† by fraud or by violence, "*treasures of wickedness*" (Prov. x. 2). But plainly the first recommendation to the possessors of such would be to restore it to its rightful owners, as Zacchæus, on his conversion, expressed his determination to do (Luke xix. 8), for "he that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is ridiculous" (Ecclus. xxxiv. 18 ; and see xxxv. 12), and out of such there could never be offered accepted alms to that God who has said, "I hate robbery for burnt-offering." Only when this

\* Yet, at the same time, who could be entirely satisfied with such a summing up of the parable as that given by Calvin: *Summa hujus parabolæ est, humaniter et benigne cum proximis nostris esse agendum, ut quum ad Dei tribunal ventum fuerit, liberalitatis nostræ fructus ad nos redeat* Who does not feel that there must be something more in it than merely this? for if this only, why an *unjust* steward? This is at the same time the point which the early Church writers mainly, often exclusively, make,—that the parable is an earnest exhortation to liberal almsgiving. So Irenæus (*Con. Hær.* iv. 30), Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, xxi. 27), Athanasius, Theophylact: so also Erasmus, Luther,—who says: "It is a sermon on good works, and especially against avarice, that men abuse not wealth, but therewith help poor and needy people,"—and many more.

† The words so interpreted would be easily open to abuse, as though a man might compound with his conscience and with God, and by giving some small portion of alms out of unjustly acquired wealth make the rest clean unto him. Plutarch speaks thus of some, ἀπὸ ἱεροσυλίας θεοσεβοῦντες; and Augustine affirms (*Serm.* cxiii. 2) that such abuse of the words was actually made: Hoc quidam male intelligendo rapiunt res alienas, et aliquid inde pauperibus largiuntur, et putant se facere quod præceptum est. Dicunt enim, rapere res alienas, mammona est iniquitatis: erogare inde aliquid, maxime egentibus sanctis, hoc est facere amicos de mammonâ iniquitatis. Intellectus iste corrigendus est, imo de tabulis cordis vestri omnino delendus est.

restoration is impossible,\* which, of course, must continually be the case, could it be lawfully bestowed upon the poor. Others again say that it is not exactly wealth which the present possessor has unjustly acquired, but that wealth which from the very nature of the world and the world's business can scarcely ever have been gotten together without sin somewhere—without something of the defilement of the world from which it was gathered clinging to it;†—if not sin in the present possessor, yet in some of those, nearer or more remote, from or through whom he received it: which being so, he that inherits the wealth inherits also the obligation to make good the wrongs committed in the getting of it together.

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\* Thus the Jewish proverb, *Pastorum, exactorum, et publicanorum restitutio est difficilis*.

† In this sense Jerome quotes the proverb, *Dives aut iniquus aut iniqui hæres*, as illustrative of the parable and Cajetan says, it is called "*mammon of unrighteousness*," eo quod iara vel nullæ sunt divitiæ, in quarum congregatione seu conversatione non intervenient peccatum, vel habentium, vel ministriorum, vel patrum seu avorum. We might quote in this view *Eccles. xxvii. 2*: "As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling;" and the Italian proverb, *Mai diventò fiume grande, che non v'entrasse acqua torbida*. Augustine (*Quæst. Evang. ii. qu. 34*): *Quia non sunt istæ divitiæ nisi iniquis qui in eis constituunt spem atque copiam beatitudinis suæ*, cf. *Serm. l. 4*. Tertullian's explanation (*Adv. Marc. iv. 33*) is a little different; money is so called because the love of it is the root of all evil: *Injustitiæ enim auctorem, et dominatorem totius seculi nummum scimus omnes*; Melancthon,—because of the manifold abuses that are almost inseparably connected with it: *Vocat mammonam injustam non quod sint injuste partæ [divitiæ], non quod contra conscientiam occupatæ sint, sed propter abusum multiplices, qui in hac infirmitate humani generis sequi solent (Eccles. v. 13)*.—If what some have said could be established, namely, that "*mammon*" (which would more correctly be spelt with a single *m*) was the name of a Syrian god, who was worshipped as presiding over wealth, in the same way as *Plutus* is the god of riches in the Greek mythology, the antithesis in the words, "*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*," would come out more strongly: "*Ye cannot serve the true God and an idol or false god at once*" But there is no satisfactory proof of the assertion. It is repeated by Schleusner, who makes, as usual, references which he has evidently never verified,—one to Tertullian [a *Syris religiose colebatur, teste Tertulliano*], who says nothing of the kind, *Adv. Marc. iv. 33*, which must be the passage meant: and another, which being followed up, proves only that an obscure grammarian of the eleventh century said

But the comparison with ver. 12, where "*unrighteous mammon*," a phrase equivalent to "*mammon of unrighteousness*," is set against "*true riches*"—these "*true*" being evidently heavenly enduring goods, such as neither fade nor fail,—makes it far more probable that the "*mammon of unrighteousness*" is the uncertain, unstable mammon, that which is one man's today, and another's tomorrow, which if a man trust in, he is sure to be trusting in a vain and deceitful thing that will sooner or later prove false and betray his confidence, so that he will find that trusting in it, he will have trusted in a lie.\* And "*mammon of unrighteousness*" it may in a deeper sense be justly called, since it is certain that in all wealth a principle of evil is implied; for in a perfect state of society,—in a realized kingdom of God upon earth,—there would be no such thing as property belonging to one man more than another. In the moment of the Church's first love, when that kingdom was for an instant realized, "all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts iv. 32-35);† and this ex-

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so. Neither Augustine (*De Serm. Dom. in Mon.* 2) nor Jerome (*Ad Algas* qu. 6), who both explain the word, give a hint of the kind. All that Augustine says there, or *Serm.* cxiii. 2, is this: Quod Punici dicunt mammon, Latine lucium vocatur quod Hebræi dicunt mammona, Latine divitiæ vocantur,—and Jerome no more. The erroneous notion belongs to the middle ages. Thus Peter Lombard (ii dist. 6): Nomine dæmonis divitiæ vocantur, scilicet Mammona. Est enim Mammon nomen dæmonis, quo nomine vocantur divitiæ secundum Syriam linguam—See a good note by Drusus in the *Crit. Sac.* (in loc.).

\* The use of *ἀδίκος* for "false" runs through the whole Septuagint. Thus, Deut. xix. 16, *μάρτυς ἀδίκος*, a false witness; and ver. 18, *ἐμαρτύρησεν ἄδικα*, he hath witnessed falsely. See Prov. vi. 19; xii. 17; Jer. v. 31, "The prophets prophesy falsely" (*ἀδίκα*); and many more examples might be adduced. So here the "*unrighteous*" mammon is the false mammon; that which will betray the reliance which is placed on it (1 Tim. vi. 17), which we must leave, or which will leave us (Prov. xxiii. 5). Thus *ἰατροὶ ἀδικοὶ* (Job xxi. 4), "physicians of no value."

† Augustine: In animam unam et cor unum conflati caritatis igne, quorum nemo dicebat aliquid proprium: and *Enarr. in Ps.* lxxviii. he explains "*mammon of unrighteousness*:" Fortasse ea ipsa est iniquitas quia tu habes et alter non habet, tu abundas et alter eget; as he says elsewhere in the same spirit: Res *alienæ* possidentur, cum superflue possidentur. Thus Aquinas: Divitiæ iniquitatis, i.e. inæqualitatis; of which one has so much and another so little.

istence of property has ever been so strongly felt as a witness for the selfishness of man, that in all ideas of a perfect commonwealth,—which, if perfect, must of course be a Church as well as a State,—from Plato's down to the Socialists', this of the communion of goods has made a necessary condition. So that though the possessor of the wealth, or those who transmitted it to him, may have fairly acquired it, yet it is not less this "*unrighteous mammon*," witnessing in its very existence as one man's and not every man's, for the corruption and fault and selfishness of man,—for the absence of that highest love, which would have made each man feel that whatever was his, was also every one's beside, and would have rendered it impossible that a *mine* and *thine* should ever have existed. With all this, we must not of course forget that the attempt prematurely to realize this or any other little fragment or corner of the kingdom of God, apart from the rest,—the corruption and evil of man's heart remaining unremoved, and being either overlooked or denied,—has ever been one of the most fruitful sources of worst mischiefs in the world.

The words, "*that when ye fail*,"\* are of course an euphemistic way of saying, "*that when ye die*." Many, however, have shrunk from referring what follows, "*they may receive you*," to the friends which were to be made by help of the *unrighteous mammon*; such application seeming to them to

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\* It may perhaps be a question whether the other reading, *ἐκλίπη* ("*that when it fails*," i.e. the mammon), be not to be preferred. It is decidedly so by Schulz (*ub. d. Par v. Verwalter*, p. 81), though he allows that as regards number of Mss. it is supported by inferior authority. Many, however, of the oldest versions bear witness for that reading, which Lachmann has also admitted into his text; and Tischendorf, *ἐκλείπη* yet not the Vulgate, which has *cum defeceritis*, nor yet the older Latin (*IRENÆUS, Con. Hær. iv. 49*), *quando fugati fueritis*. We certainly have more than one word of the same family, to show how fitly *ἐκλείπειν* might be used in the sense which would thus be given it: thus *θησαυρὸν ἀνεκλείπτου* (Luke xii. 33), *ἀνεκλίπης θησαυρός* (Wisd. vii. 14), *πλοῦτος ἀνεκλίπης* (Wisd. viii. 16). But on the other hand it may be said that *ἐκλείπειν* is also frequently used for the *failing* of men through death from the earth, of which any Lexicon of the Septuagint will supply many examples. Should *ἐκλίπη* be preferred, the words of Seneca (*De Benef. vi. 3*) will afford a

attribute too much to men and to their intercession, to imply a right on their parts who had received the benefits, to introduce their benefactors "*into everlasting habitations*," and so to be trenching on the prerogative which is God's alone. Thus it has been sometimes said "*they*" are the angels, as we find angels (ver. 22) carrying Lazarus into Abraham's bosom; or others understand that it is God and Christ who will "*receive*;" others again affirm the phrase to be impersonal, St. Luke undoubtedly more than once using the plural impersonally (xii. 11, 20; xxiii. 31); so that "*they may receive you*" would be equivalent to, "You may be received." But if we look at this verse, not as containing an isolated doctrine, but in its close and living connexion with the parable of which it gives the moral, we shall at once perceive how this language comes here to be used, and its justification. There is plainly allusion to the debtors; they, being made friends, were to receive the deposed steward into temporary habitations; and the phrase before us is an echo of what had just gone before in regard to him and them, by employing which now our Lord throws back light upon the parable, and at once fixes the attention of his hearers upon, and explains, its most important part. It is idle to press the words further, and against all analogy of faith to assert, on the strength of this single phrase, that with any except God, that even with his glorified saints, there will reside power of their own to admit into the kingdom of heaven; but idle too on the other hand to affirm, that "*they may receive you*," in the second clause of the sentence, can refer to any other but the friends mentioned in the first — which no one, unless alarmed by the consequences which

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striking parallel: Egredie mihi videtur M. Antonius apud Rabirium poetam, cum fortunam suam transeuntem alio videbat et sibi nihil relictum . . . exclamare: Hoc habeo, quodcumque dedi. O quantum habere potuit, si voluisset! Hæ sunt divitiæ certæ, in quâcunque sortis humanæ levitate, uno loco permansuræ: quæ quo majores fuerint, hoc minorem habebunt invidiam. Quid tanquam tuo pareis? Procurator es . . . Queris quomodo illa tua facias? donando. Consule ergo rebus tuis et certam tibi earum et inexpugnabilem possessionem para: honestiores illas non solum, sed tutiores facturus.



others might draw from the words, could possibly for an instant call in question.\* The true parallel to, and at once the explanation and the guard of, this passage, is evidently Matt. xxv. 34-40. The heavenly habitations being termed "*everlasting*,"† are thus tacitly contrasted with the temporary shelter which was all that the steward, the child of the present world, procured for himself with all his plotting and planning, his cunning and his dishonesty,—also, it may be, with the temporary stewardship which every man exercises on earth, from which it is not long before he fails and is removed:—how important it is therefore, the word will imply, that he should make sure his entrance into a kingdom that shall not be moved.‡

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\* Cocceius. *Δίξονται* posset intelligi impersonaliter, . . . sed filum parabolæ postulat ut referatur ad amicos. Non quod homines suis mentis possint recipere in æterna tabernacula, sed quod filius Dei lætantibus, applaudentibus, et in Deo ac Spiritu ejus volentibus, a Deo recipiantur ii, qui amici ipsorum esse voluerint. Voluntas justorum et beatorum est efficax, quia est *φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος*, Rom. viii. 27. Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Quæst. Evang.* ii. qu. 38; and GERHARD (*Loc. Theoll.* loc. xxvii. 8, 3): Recipiunt nos tum peccibus in hac vitâ, tum testimonio ac suffragio in die judicii

† These *αἰώνιοι*, those *πρόσκαιροι*. The term *σκηνή*, the tent which was pitched at evening and struck in the morning, or the temporary booth (Lev. xxiii. 40-43) erected with planks and branches, itself implies anything but a fixed lasting habitation; on the contrary, it is directly set against such, Heb. xi. 9, 10, where it is said that Abraham dwelt in tabernacles (*σκηναῖς*), while he looked for a city which hath foundations. And the image from the unstable *σκηνή* is used by Hezekiah to set forth the briefness of life (Isai. xxxviii. 12): "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent." See Job xxvii. 18; 2 Cor. v. 1. Thus too the temporary sojourning of the Son of God on the earth is a *σκηνοῦν* (John i. 14). But these *σκηναί* are *αἰώνιοι*, they are *μοναί* (John xiv. 2), being pitched by God, "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down" (*σκηναὶ αἱ οὐ μὴ σιτισθῶσιν*, LXX.), "not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken" (Isai. xxxiii. 20). It is not accurate to adduce 2 Cor. v. 1 here as a parallel; for the "building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," of which St. Paul there speaks, is plainly not the abiding heavenly mansions, but the glorified body, as contrasted with "our earthly house of this tabernacle," or our present body, *τὸ γεῶδες σκῆνος*, as it is called, Wisd. ix. 15.

‡ So, according to Diodorus Siculus, the Egyptians called the

In the verses which follow (10-13), and which stand in vital coherence with the parable, it is very observable that not prudence, but *faithfulness*, in the dispensation of the things earthly is especially commended; which puts far away any possible abuse of the parable, as though the unfaithfulness of the steward there could have found anything but the strongest reprobation from Christ; just as in another place, having (Matt. x. 16) said, "Be wise as serpents," lest this wisdom should degenerate into cunning, He immediately guarded the precept, adding, "and harmless as doves." The things earthly whereof men have a dispensation, and wherein they may show their faithfulness and their fitness to be intrusted with a higher stewardship, are slightly called "*that which is least*," as compared with those spiritual gifts and graces which are "*much*;" they are termed "*unrighteous*," or deceitful, "*mammon*," as set against the heavenly riches of faith and love, which are "*true*" and durable "*riches*;" they are called "*that which is another man's*,"\* by comparison with the heavenly goods, which when possessed are our own, not something merely without us, but which become a part of our very selves, assimilating to our truest life. Thus the Lord at once casts a slight on the things worldly and temporal, while yet at the same time He magnifies the importance of a right administration of them; since in the dispensing of these,—which He declares to be the least,—to be false and without any intrinsic worth,—to be alien from man's essential being, He yet also declares that a man may prove his fidelity, will inevitably show what is in him, and whether he be fit to be intrusted with that which has a true and enduring value, with a ministration in the kingdom of God.† And in ver. 13 he further states what the fidelity

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houses of the living *καταλύσεις*, but of the dead *ἀιδίους οἶκους*. Cf. Eccles. xii. 5, "Man goeth to his long home" (*οἶκον αἰῶνος αὐτοῦ*, LXX.).

\* *Divitiæ non veræ nec vestræ*, as Augustine terms them.

† The Jews have various sayings and parables concerning the manner in which God proves men in little things, to try whether

is, which in this stewardship is required: it is a choosing of God instead of mammon for our Lord. For in this world we are in the condition of servants from whom two masters are claiming allegiance: one is God, man's rightful lord; the other is this unrighteous mammon, which was given to be our servant, to be wielded by us in God's interests, and in itself to be considered by us as something slight, transient, and another's; but which has, in a sinful world, erected itself into a lord, and now demands obedience from us, which if we yield, we can be no longer faithful servants and stewards of God's. We shall no longer lay out according to his will that which He indeed gave us to be merely a thing beneath us, but which we have allowed to have a will and voice of its own, and to speak to us in accents of command. We cannot any longer be faithful servants of God, for that usurping lord has a will so different from his will, gives commands so opposite to his, that occasions must speedily arise when one or other will have to be slighted, despised, and disobeyed, if the other be regarded, honoured, and served;\* God, for instance, will command a scattering, when mammon will urge to a further heaping and gathering; God will require spending upon others, when mammon, or the world, a spending upon our own lusts. Therefore, these two lords having characters so different, and giving commands so opposite, it will be impossible to reconcile their services (Jam. iv. 4); one must be despised, if the other is held to; the only faithfulness to

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they are worthy to be intrusted with great. Thus they say of David, that God tried him first with "those few sheep in the wilderness," which because he faithfully and boldly kept (1 Sam. xvii. 34-36), therefore God "took him from the sheepfolds to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance" (Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71). See SCHOETTGEN'S *Hor. Heb.* vol. i. p. 300.

\* Stella has a lively comparison in illustration of this: Si duobus hominibus aliquâ viâ incedentibus canis sequitur, non facile judicare poteris uter illorum dominus ejus sit. Ceterum si alter ab altero discedat, statim apparet claiissime quis dominus sit. Canis enim, ignoto relicto, ad notum accedit, eumque dominum esse suum clare ostendit.

the one is to break with the other; "Ye cannot serve\* God and mammon." Such appears to me to be the connexion between ver. 13 and the preceding verses, and between the whole of these verses and the parable of which they surely are intended to give the moral.†

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\* Δουλεύειν, to which word its full force is to be given; a force which Chrysostom excellently brings out, when, after noting how Abraham and Job were rich, and yet found favour with God, he goes on to observe that it was because each of these, though rich, οὐκ ἐδούλευε τῷ μαμμωνῷ, ἀλλ' εἶχεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐκράτει, καὶ δεσπότης [αὐτοῦ] οὐ δοῦλος ἦν. See also SUICER, s. v. δουλεύω.

† Among the many strange explanations to which this parable has given birth, perhaps one of the strangest is recorded by Jerome (*Ad Algas Ep.* 121, qu. 6), who quotes it from the *Commentaries* of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch. According to this, the unjust steward is the Apostle Paul, who was forcibly thrust out by God of his Judaism, and being so, made himself a reception in many hearts, through the declaring the Gospel of the grace of God, of the remission of sins; and for this had praise, that he had well done, "being changed from the austerity of the Law to the clemency of the Gospel." Elsewhere, however (*De Script. Eccles.*), Jerome doubts the genuineness of the *Commentaries* extant in his time under the name of Theophilus. This is only outdone by a modern writer mentioned by Unger (*De Par. Jes. Nat.* p. 85), who affirms the Lord to have meant Himself by the unjust steward! It sounds almost irreverent to mention in immediate juxtaposition with this, that Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot have been proposed as the persons by Him represented. But the meanest and most grovelling of all expositions is given by Hartmann (*Comm. de Œcon. Improbo*, Lips. 1830), of which it will suffice to say that the author explains ver. 16 to mean this: Make to yourselves friends of those that are rich in this world (this is his interpretation of 'ΕΚ τ. μαμ. τ. ἄδικ), that when through any mishap you get low in the world, you may be sure of a retreat for the remainder of your days. In WOLF's *Cura*, and KÖCHER's *Analecta*, other extravagant interpretations may be found, which it would be little worth while to repeat.

## PARABLE XXVI.

### THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

LUKE xvi. 19-31.

IT must be acknowledged that the connexion of verses 15-18 with one another, and of all with this parable, is not easy to trace; while yet to say, as Hammond and others do, that St. Luke has here thrown together various sayings of our Lord's, uttered on very different occasions, is a most unsatisfactory explanation; for what should such a miscellaneous collection of sayings do here? or how will they have come to be here introduced? But however loosely strung together verses 15-18 may at first sight appear, there is a thread of connexion running through them all, and afterwards joining them with the parable; there is one leading thought throughout, namely that in all is contained rebuke and threatening for the Pharisees. They had heard the Lord's exhortation to a large and liberal bounty, his warning to his disciples that they should not attempt to serve at once God and the world; and they testified by look and gesture, and it may be also openly in words, their dislike of the doctrine, and scorn of the teacher; "*The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him.*"\* Whereupon He turned and addressed to them that discourse, which had hitherto been to the disciples. And first He rebuked their hypocrisy;—while they were "*covetous,*"† their hearts secretly given to the

\* Ἐξεμυκτήριζον αὐτόν.

† The *φιλαργυρία* here attributed to the Pharisees is to be taken in that widest and deepest sense, in which it is the *δίψα πάντων τῶν κακῶν* (1 Tim. vi. 10), the dependence upon and trust in the world rather than in God.

world, they yet would be accounted to love God above all things, they sought a reputation for holiness and righteousness before men ; but, He proceeds, highly esteemed as they were among men, they and their pretences were abomination before God, who knoweth the hearts. It is then announced to them (ver. 16) how that dispensation, of which they were the unjust stewards and unfaithful administrators, was passing away: "*The law and the prophets were until John;*" their stewardship is coming to an end, and another and a larger dispensation, in which they shall no more have "the key of knowledge," to admit or to exclude, is begun: "*The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*" Yet not that the law itself was to be abolished, for that would be eternal as the God that gave it (ver. 17), being the expression of his perfections and holy will: which being so, how great was their guilt, who, pretending to be zealous for its honour, the guardians of its purity, were continually tampering with it in some of its most sacred enactments, as in those concerning marriage (ver. 18), and relaxing its obligations ; and thereupon the parable follows.

But that being evidently addressed to the Pharisees, a difficulty at once presents itself. They were, indeed, "*covetous*" (ver. 14), lovers of money, but prodigal excess in living, like that of the rich man in the parable, is nowhere, either in history or in Scripture, imputed to them. On the contrary, we learn from cotemporary historical\* sources, that they were remarkably sparing and abstemious in their manner of life, many of them rigid ascetics ; and among all the severe rebukes which our Lord addressed to them, sins of luxury and prodigal excess are nowhere laid to their charge. Their sins were in the main spiritual, and what other sins they had were such as were compatible with a high reputation for spirituality, which covetousness is, but a profuse self-indulgence and an eminently

\* Josephus (*Antt.* xviii. 1, 3) says of them, τὴν δίαίταν ἐξευτελίζουσιν, οὐδὲν εἰς τὸ μαλακώτερον ἐνδιδόντες, and that the Sadducees mocked them for their fasts and austerities.

luxurious living is not. Mosheim feels the difficulty so strongly, that he supposes the parable directed against the Sadducees,\* of whose selfish indulgence of themselves, and hard-hearted contempt for the needs of others (for they had wrought into their very religious scheme that poverty was a crime, or at least an evidence of the displeasure of God), we shall then, he says, have an exact description. But the parable cannot be for them; there is no mention of Sadducees present, neither can there be any change between ver. 18 and 19 in the persons addressed. This will appear yet more evident in the original than in our version, which has omitted the particle that marks the unbroken tenor of the discourse, and to give the force of which, the parable ought to begin not simply, "*There was,*" but, "*Now there was a certain rich man.*"

The explanation, however, seems to be the following. While it is quite true that covetousness was the sin of the Pharisees, and not prodigal excess in living, while it was rather an undue gathering than an undue spending, yet hoarding and squandering so entirely grow out of the same evil root, are so equally the consequences of unbelief in God and in God's word, of trust in the creature rather than in the Creator, are so equally a serving of mammon (though the form of the service may be different), that when the Lord would rebuke their sin, which was the love of the world and trust in the world rather than in the living God, there was nothing to hinder his taking his example from a sin opposite in appearance to theirs,—which yet was one springing out of exactly the same evil condition of heart,—by which to condemn them. For it ought never to be left out of sight or forgotten, that it is not the primary purpose of the parable to teach the fearful consequences which will follow on the abuse of wealth

\* *De Reb. Christ. ante Const.* p. 49. So also Wetstein, who says of the Pharisees, jejunabant crebro, modestius vestiebantur. This frequent fasting (Luke xviii. 12) could not be reconciled with the faring sumptuously *every day*.

and on the hard-hearted contempt of the poor,—this only sub-ordinately,—but the fearful consequences of unbelief, of having the heart set on this world, and refusing to give credence to the invisible world which is here known only to faith, until by a miserable and too late experience the existence of such an unseen world has been discovered. The sin of Dives in its root is unbelief: hard-hearted contempt of the poor, luxurious squandering on self, are only the forms which it takes; the seat of the disease is within, these are but the running sores which witness for the inward plague. He who believes not in an invisible world of righteousness and truth and spiritual joy, must of necessity place his hope in the things which he sees, which he can touch, and taste, and smell,—will come to trust in them, and to look to them for his blessedness, for he knows of no other: it is not of the essence of the matter, whether he hoards or squanders: in either case he sets his hope on the world. He who believes not in a God delighting in mercy and loving-kindness, and that will be an abundant rewarder of them that have showed mercy, and severe punisher of all that have refused to show it, will soon come to shut up his bowels of compassion from his brethren, whether that so he may place more money in his chest, or have more to spend upon his own lusts. This was the sin of Dives and the root of all his other sins, that he believed not in this higher world, which is apprehended by faith,—a world not merely beyond the grave,—but a kingdom of God, a kingdom of truth and love existing even in the midst of this cruel and wicked world; and this too was the sin of the worldly-minded Pharisees: and his punishment was, that he made the discovery of the existence of that truer state of things only to his own unutterable and irremediable loss. That his sin at its root was unbelief shows itself again in his supposing that his brethren would give heed to a ghost, while they refused to give heed to the sure word of God—to “*Moses and the prophets.*” For it is of the very essence of unbelief, that it gives that credence to portents and prodigies which it refuses to the truth of God. Caligula, who mocked at the existence of the gods, would hide himself under a bed



when it thundered;\* and superstition and unbelief are as twin births of the corrupt heart of man. They are of those "extremes" whose nature it is evermore to "meet." It is most important to keep in mind that this, the rebuke of unbelief, is the aim and central thought of the parable; for if we conceive of its primary purpose as to warn against the abuse of riches, it will neither satisfactorily cohere with the discourse in which it is found, nor will the parable itself possess that unity of purpose, that tending of all its parts to a single centre, which so remarkably distinguishes the parables of our Lord: it will seem to divide itself into two parts, which are only slightly linked together,—to have not a single but a double point.† But when we pierce deeper into the heart of the matter, and contemplate unbelief as the essence of the rich man's sin, his hard-heartedness towards others, with his prodigality towards himself, only as the forms in which it showed itself, we shall then at once admire the perfect unity of all its parts, and the vital connexion of the conversation with Abraham in the latter part, with the sumptuous fare, the "*purple and fine linen*," of the earlier.

Here, at the threshold of the parable, it will be well to notice, that besides the literal and obvious, there has also ever been an allegorical, interpretation of it, which, though at no time the dominant one in the Church, has frequently made itself heard, and which has been suggested by Augustine, by Gregory the Great, by Theophylact, and by more modern commentators than one. According to this, the parable, like so many others exclusively given by St. Luke, sets forth the past and future relations of the Jew and the Gentile. Dives is the Jew, or the Jewish nation, clothed in the purple of the king and the fine linen of the priest, the "kingdom of priests." He fares sumptuously, that is, the Jews are richly provided

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\* SÆTONIUS, *Caligula*, c. 51.

† One of the latest impugnors of the accuracy of the Evangelical records, as we possess them (WEISSE, *Evang. Gesch.* vol. ii. p. 168), has brought forward this very objection, only showing thereby how entirely he has himself failed to enter into the spirit of the parable.

with all spiritual privileges, not hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of God, but full of their own righteousness, and who instead of seeking to impart their own blessings to the Gentiles,—to the miserable Lazarus that lay covered with sores at their gate,—rather glorified themselves by comparison in their exclusive acquaintance with God, and possession of his favour. To them is annunced,—to the Pharisees, considered as the representatives of the nation, for in them all that was evil in the Jewish spirit was concentrated,—that an end is approaching, nay, has come upon them already: Lazarus and Dives are both to die; the former state of things is to be utterly abolished. Lazarus is to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; in other words, the believing Gentiles are to be brought by the *messengers* of the new covenant into the peace and consolations of the Gospel. But Dives is to be cast into hell; the Jews are to forfeit all the privileges which they abused, and will find themselves in the most miserable condition, exiles from the presence of God, and with his wrath abiding upon them to the uttermost, so that they shall seek in vain for some, even the slightest, alleviation of their woful estate.

If the present had been expressly named a parable, it would tend somewhat to confirm this or some similar interpretation;\* for according to that commonly received, it is cer-

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\* Teichman, in an elaborate essay (*Comm. Crit. et Theol. in Luc.* xvi. Amstel. 1695), has wrought out an explanation in part similar to this, but also with important differences. In this too Dives is the Jewish people, but by Lazarus is signified Christ, rejected and despised by the proud nation, and full of sores, that is, bearing the sins of his people, wounded and bruised for their iniquities (Isai. liii. 3-5). Vitringa gives the same explanation (*Erklar. der Parab.* p. 939); but it is not modern, for it is mentioned by Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* ii. qu. 38): *Lazarum Dominum significare accipiamus . . . jacentem ad januum divitis, quia se ad aures superbissimas Judæorum Incarnationis humilitate dejecit* (2 Cor. viii. 9). . . . *Ulcera passionis sunt Domini ex infirmitate carnis, quam pro nobis suscipere dignatus est . . . Sinus Abrahamæ, secretum Patris, quo post passionem resurgens assumptus est Dominus.* It is to be found also in Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* viii. 15): *Cui [Lazaro] similem illum puto, qui cæsus sæpius a Judæis, ad patientiam credentium et vocationem gentium ulcera sui corporis lambenda quibusdam velut canibus offerebat; and*

tainly no parable, the very essence of that order of composition being, that one set of persons and things is named, another is signified,—they are set over against one another; while here the rich man would mean a rich man, and the poor man a poor,—the purple and fine linen would mean purple and fine linen, and so on. Thus, in fact, the question concerning which there has been such a variety of opinion from the first, namely, whether this be a parable, or a history (history real or fictitious it matters not), does in fact wholly depend on the manner in which it is interpreted: if the ordinary interpretation be the right one, it is certainly not, in the strictest sense of the word, a parable: if that above proposed, or one similar, it is.\* Nor will it, say those who support the allegorical explanation, even if that be admitted, lose any of its obvious practical value; it will still, as before, be a warning against trust in the creature, a declaration of the fearful consequences of unbelief, only that the lower selfishness of the flesh will be used as a symbol to set forth the worse selfishness of the spirit. It will not, indeed, any longer be the ultimate aim of the parable to teach the miserable doom which must follow on the selfish abuse of worldly goods, on the living merely for this present world; but yet more strikingly, that miserable doom is assumed as so certain and evident, that it may be used as the substratum, on which to superinduce another moral, through which to afford another warning. Whatever

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then he quotes Matt. xv. 27. See also GILL's *Exp. of the N. T.* (in loc).—Schleiermacher's supposition that Herod Antipas, infamous for his incestuous marriage (see ver. 18), is pointed at in Dives, is sufficiently curious, and one might be tempted at first to suppose, original. Yet this interpretation, in its germ at least, is to be found in Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* iv. 34). He too sees in ver. 18 an allusion to Herod's marriage, and observes that the connexion is closer than at first sight appears between that verse and the parable which follows: *Nam et illud [scil. argumentum parabolæ] quantum ad Scripturæ superficiem subito propositum est, quantum ad intentionem sensûs et ipsum cohæret mentioni Joannis male tractati, et sugillatui Herodis male maritali, utriusque exitum deformans, Herodis tormenta et Joannis refrigeria.*

\* For a list of the interpreters who have held one view and the other, see SWICKER'S *Theol.* s. v. *Δάζαρος*.

might, according to the more usual interpretation, have been drawn from it of earnest warning for all the children of this present world, who have faith in nothing beyond it,—for all who are unmindful, in their own abundance, of the infinite want and woe around them, of the distresses of their fellow-men, the same may be drawn from it still. Only in addition to this warning to the world, it will yield another deeper warning to the Church, that it do not glorify and exalt itself in the multitude of its own blessings and privileges, but that it have a deep and feeling sense of the spiritual wants and miseries of all who know not God, and that it seek earnestly to remove them. Of this interpretation I will say something more presently; it is plainly not incompatible with the commonly received interpretation, to which it is now time to return.

*“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously\* every day.”* It was not on some high day that he thus arrayed himself, but this *“purple and fine linen”* was his ordinary apparel; so much is implied in the word; thus too was it with his sumptuous fare; it was his every day’s entertainment. The extreme costliness of the purple dye of antiquity is well known;† the honour in

\* Parkhurst is not satisfied with this *“fared sumptuously,”* which he thinks an inadequate rendering of the *εὐφραινόμενος λαμπρῶς* of the original. There is something, he says, wanting in our version, that should show the exultation and merriment of heart in which the rich man lived. He proposes, *“who lived in jovial splendour;”* and Mr. Greswell *“enjoying himself sumptuously.”* Teelman (*Comm. in Luc. xvi. p. 320, seq.*) makes the same objection to the Vulgate, *“epulabatur laute,”* and enters into the matter at length. The old Italic was nearer to their view, for it seems to have had (*IRENÆUS, Con. Hær. iii. 41*) *jucundabatur nitide*; and Luther, who translates, *“und lebte herrlich und in Freuden.”* But the immediate mention which follows, of the crumbs falling from the table, makes it most probable that some sumptuous feastings, some *eximîa veste et victu convivia*, are here indicated; and both *λαμπρός* and *εὐφραίνομαι*, if oftener used in the other sense, are frequently enough in this. Hesychius interprets *εὐωχθέντα* as = *εὐφρανθέντα*; and we read of *λαμπρὰ ἐδέσματα* (*Ecclus. xxix. 26*).

† That is, the true sea-purple. Its rarity arose from the exceeding small quantity, but a few drops, of the liquid which served for the dyeing, found in each fish (*PLIN. H. N. ix. 60*). All modern inquirers

which this colour, accounted the royal one, was held; the purple garment was then, as now in the East, a royal gift (Esth. xviii. 15; Dan. v. 7; 1 Macc. x. 20; xi. 58; xiv. 43). With it too idols were often clothed (Jer. x. 9). There was as much then of pride as of luxury in its use. And the byssus, which we have rightly translated "*fine linen*," was hardly in less price or esteem;\* so that he plainly sought out for himself all that was costliest and rarest. Yet while this was so, it has often been observed, and cannot be observed too often, that he is not accused of any breach of the law,—not, like those rich men in St. James (v. 1-6), of any flagrant crimes. "Jesus said not, a calumniator; He said not, an oppressor of the poor; He said not, a robber of other men's goods, nor a receiver of such, nor a false accuser; He said not, a spoiler of orphans, a persecutor of widows: nothing of these. But what did He say?—'*There was a certain rich man.*' And what was his crime?—a lazar lying at his gate, and lying unrelieved."† Nor is he even accused of being, as he is sometimes called, for instance in the heading of the chapter in our Bibles,— "a glutton;" to call him such, or a "Sir Epicure Mammon," serves only to turn the edge of the parable. For, on the con-

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have failed to discover what shell-fish it exactly was which yielded the precious dye (WINER's *Realwörterbuch*, s. v. Purpur).

\* PLINY (*H. N.* xix. 4) tells of a kind of byssus which was exchanged for its weight in gold: it served, he says, mulierum maxime deliciis. It is not probable, as has been sometimes asserted, that we have a *ἐν δια δύοιν* in "*purple and fine linen*," so that it indeed signifies fine linen dyed of a purple hue. Though the byssus did sometimes receive this colour, yet its glory was rather in its dazzling whiteness: thus Rev. xix. 8, 14, "*fine linen, white and clean*:" and PLINY, *H. N.* xix. 2, speaking of the fine linen of Upper Egypt, *Nec ulla sunt eis candore molliūque præferenda: vestes inde gratissimæ*. The byssus here was the inner vest, the purple the outer robe. The two occur together, Rev. xviii. 12, as part of the merchandize of Babylon. The blue and white formed a highly prized combination of colours, Esth. viii. 15. (See the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. Byssus, p. 169; WINER's *Realwörterbuch*, s. v. Baumwolle; and BÄHR's *Symbolik d. Mos. Cult.* vol. i. pp. 310, 338, vol. ii. p. 72.)

† Augustine (*Serm.* clxxviii. 3). Massillon has one of his most deeply impressive Lent Sermons upon this parable, in which he labours especially to bring out this point.

trary, there is nothing to make us think him other than a reputable man, of whom none could say worse than that he loved to dwell at ease, that he desired to remove far off from himself all things painful to the flesh, to surround himself with all things pleasurable.—His name Christ has not told us, but the poor man's only:\* “Seems He not to you,” asks Augustine,† “to have been reading from that book where He found the name of the poor man written, but found not the name of the rich; for that book is the book of life?” “Jesus,” says Cajetan, “of a purpose named the beggar, but the rich man He designated merely as ‘*a certain man*,’ so to testify that the spiritual order of things is contrary to the worldly. In the world, the names of the rich are known, and when they are talked of, they are designated by their names; but the names of the poor are either not known, or if known are counted unworthy to be particularly noted.”‡

At the gate of the rich man, whose name though well known on earth, was thus unrecognized in heaven, the beggar Lazarus was flung—brought, it may be, thither by the last who took any care or charge of him upon earth; and who now released themselves gladly of their charge, counting they had done enough when they had cast him under the eye, and so upon the pity, of one so abundantly able to relieve him.

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\* *Λάζαρος*, abridged from *Ἐλεάζαρος*, and once called by Tertullian Eleazar. There are two derivations given of the name; the one most generally received would make it, Who has God only for his help; but Olshausen adheres to the other, which would derive LAZARUS from *לָזַר* = *ἀβοήθητος* (see SWICER'S *Theol. s. v. Λάζαρος*). It is a striking evidence of the deep impression which this parable has made on the mind of Christendom, that the term lazarus should have passed into so many languages as it has, losing altogether its signification as a proper name. Euthymius mentions that some called the rich man Nimeusis; and they used to show, perhaps still pretend to show, the ruins of his house at Jerusalem. Thus an old traveller: *Inde ad quindecim passus procedentibus obviam fiunt ædes (ut volunt) divitis illius epulonis, ex quadratis et dolatis constructæ lapidibus, magnifico et eleganti opere, altis muris licet ruinosis conspiciuæ.*

† *Serm. xli.*

‡ So Bengel: *Lazarus nomine suo notus in cælo: dives non censetur nomine ullo.*

The circumstance that Lazarus was laid "*at the gate*," in the vestibule or open porch of the rich man's palace, where was probably henceforth his only home—this circumstance contains an ample reply to one,\* who in his eagerness to fasten some charge on Scripture, asserts that there is no reason sufficient given why the rich man should have been punished as he was,—that "his only crime seems to have been his wealth." The beggar was cast at his very porch, so that ignorance of his distresses and miseries might in nowise be pleaded. And even if the rich man did not know, that ignorance itself would have been his crime, for it was his task to have made himself acquainted with the misery that was round him; since for what else had the leisure of wealth been given him?

As the rich man's splendid manner of living was painted in a few strokes, so in a few as expressive is set forth to us the utter misery and destitution of Lazarus. Like Job, he was "full of sores;" he was hungry, and no man gave to him,—for, since it is evidently our Lord's purpose to describe the extreme of earthly destitution, it most probably is meant that he desired, *but in vain*, "*to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table*" (Judg. i. 7);—even these were not thrown to him, at least not in such a measure as that he could be *satisfied* with them.† Shut out from human fellowship and human pity, he found sympathy only from the dumb animals; "*the dogs came and licked his sores*,"—probably the animals without a master that wander through the streets of an Eastern city (Ps. lix. 15, 16). Chrysostom indeed, and others after him, have seen in this circumstance an evidence of the extreme weakness and helplessness to which disease and hunger had

\* Strauss (*Leben Jesu*, vol. i. p. 671): but he has had a forerunner here; for among the essays written on this parable, there is one (reprinted in HASE's *Theol. Theol*) by A. L. Königsmann, which is entitled *De Divite Epulone a Christo immisericordiæ non accusato*, 1708. But Grotius rightly remarks, that Lazarus was cast in ipso divitis aspectu ut ignorantiam caussari nullo modo posset; and see NEANDER's *Leben Jesu*, p. 205, note.

† The words, however, which are found in the Vulgate, *Et nemo illi dabat*, do not belong here, and are evidently transferred from ch. xv. 16.

reduced him ; he lay like one dead, and without strength even to fray away the dogs, which approached to lick his sores, and thus to aggravate his misery by exasperating their pain. Yet this is hardly what is meant: for medicinal virtue was in ancient times popularly attributed to the tongue of the dog;\* which, as moist and smooth, would certainly not exasperate, but rather assuage, the smart of a wound. Rather by this the neglect and cruelty of the rich man are enhanced and set in the strongest light;—man neglected his fellow-man, beheld his sufferings with a careless eye and an unmoved heart, yet was it a misery on which even the beasts had pity, so that what little they could they did to alleviate his sufferings. We have in fact in the two descriptions stroke for stroke. Dives is covered with purple and fine linen ; Lazarus is covered only with sores. The one fares sumptuously, the other desires to be fed with crumbs. The one, although this is left to our imagination to fill up, has numerous attendants to wait on his every caprice, the other only dogs to tend his sores.

There is nothing expressly said concerning the moral condition of Lazarus—his faith, his patience, his resignation to the will of God. Yet these from the sequel must all be assumed, since his poverty of itself would never have brought him to Abraham's bosom. We may certainly assume that he suffered after a godly sort, that he did not "call the proud happy," nor say that he had cleansed his heart in vain, but patiently abided, putting his trust in the Lord. But for *this* his sufferings themselves, however great, would have profited him nothing, would have brought him no whit nearer the kingdom of God. In all homiletic use of the parable this should never be left out of sight. Thus Augustine has more than one admirable discourse, in which, having brought home to the rich and great, to the prosperous children of the world,

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\* H. de Sto. Victore: *Lingua canis dum lingit vulnus, curat* (see also WINER, *Realwörterbuch*, s. v. Speichel). When Hilary (*Tract. in Ps. cxxii.*) sets him on a dunghill (in *aggestu fimi*), this also is a needless exaggeration of his own.



the awful warning which is here for them, he turns round to the poor, and exhorts them that they be not deceived, as though mere outward poverty were of itself sufficient to bring them into a conformity with Lazarus, and into the possession of the good things which he inherited. He tells them that poverty of spirit must go along with that external poverty, which last is to be looked at, not as itself constituting humility, but only as a great help to it; even as wealth is to be regarded not as of necessity excluding humility, but only as a great hindrance to it, and a great temptation, lest they that have it be high-minded, and come to trust in those uncertain riches rather than in the living God: and he often bids his hearers note how the very Abraham into whose bosom Lazarus was carried, was one who had been on earth rich in flocks and in herds and in all possessions.\*

But this worldly glory and this worldly misery are alike to have an end: they are the passing shows of things, not the abiding realities. "*It came to pass that the beggar died;*" he died, and how mighty the change! he whom but a moment

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\* Thus *Serm.* xiv. 2: *Aut mihi quisque mendicus debilitate fessus, pannis obsitus, fame languidus: Mihi debetur regnum cælorum, ego enim similis sum illi Lazaro: nostrum genus est cui debetur regnum cælorum, non illi generi qui induuntur purpurâ et bysso, et epulantur quotidie splendide. Augustine replies: Cum illum sanctum ulcerosum te esse dicis, timeo ne superbiendo non sis quod dicis. Esto verus pauper, esto pius, esto humilis. Nam si de ipsâ pannosâ et ulcerosâ paupertate gloriaris, quia talis fuit ille qui ante domum divitis inops jacebat, attendis quia pauper fuit et aliud non attendis. —Enarr. in Ps. lxxxv. 1.: Nunquid vere ille pauper merito illius inopiæ ablati est ab angelis, dives autem ille peccato divitiarum suarum ad tormenta missus est? In illo paupere humilitas intelligitur honorificata, in illo divite superbia damnata. Breviter probro, quia non divitiæ, sed superbia in illo divite cruciabatur. Certe ille pauper in sinum Abrahamæ sublatus est. De ipso Abraham dicit Scriptura, quia habebat hic plurimum auri et argenti, et dives fuit in terrâ. Si qui dives est ad tormenta rapitur, quomodo Abraham præcesserat pauperem, ut ablatum in sinum suum susciperet? Sed erat Abraham in divitiis pauper humilis, tremens omnia præcepta et obaudieris. Cf. *Ep.* clvii. 4; *Enarr. in Ps.* cxxxi. 15, and in *Ps.* li. 9: Quid tibi prodest, si cges facultate, et ardes cupiditate? This last passage is worth referring to, for the profound insight which it gives into the full meaning of Matt. xix. 23-26.*

before no man served, whom none but the dogs cared for, is tended of angels, is by them "carried" into the blessedness prepared for him,\* "into Abraham's bosom." This last phrase has been sometimes explained as though he was brought into the *chiefest* place of honour and felicity, such as the sons of Zebedee asked for themselves (Matt. xx. 23), that he was admitted not merely to sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of heaven at the heavenly festival, whereunto all the faithful should be admitted, but to lean on his bosom, an honour of which one only could partake, as John the beloved disciple leaned upon Jesus' bosom at the paschal supper. This explanation, however, starts altogether from a wrong assumption, since the image underlying "Abraham's bosom" is not that of a feast at all. Hades is not the place of the great festival of the kingdom, which is reserved for the actual setting up of that kingdom. This passage is not parallel to Matt. viii. 11; Luke xiii. 29, 30; but rather is to find its explanation from John i. 18, where the only-begotten Son is declared to be in the bosom of the Father; it is a figurative phrase to express the deep quietness of an innermost communion.† Besides,

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\* Luther: En qui dum vivebat, ne *unum* quidem hominem habuit amicum, repente non unius angeli, sed plurium ministerio honoratur. The belief was current among the Jews that the souls of the righteous were carried by angels into paradise; there are frequent allusions to this in the apocryphal gospels (see THILLO's *Cod. Apocryphus*, vol. i. pp. 25, 45, 777). In the heathen mythology the task was assigned to Mercury, *πομπαῖας, ψυχοπομπός, ψυχαγωγός*. So Horace: Tu piæ lætis animas reponis Sedibus.

† Iud. Capellus (*Spicilegium*, p. 56): Porro sinus Abrahæ non tam videtur hic dictus a more accumbentium mensæ (uti vulgo accipitur hæc phrasis) quam potius a puerulis qui parentibus sunt carissimi, quos parentes in sinu sive gremio foveant, in quo etiam suaviter interdum quiescunt. And Gerhard (*Loc. Theoll.* loc. xxvii. 8, 3): Vocatur sinus metaphorâ ductâ a parentibus, qui puerulos suos diurnâ discursitatione fessos, vel ex peregrinatione domum reversos, aut ex adverso aliquo casu ejulantes, solatii causâ in sinum suum recipiunt, ut ibi suaviter quiescant. Theophylact assumes the image to be rather that of a harbour, where the faithful cast anchor and are in quiet after the storms and tribulations of life. This escapes us in the English, but might be suggested equally by the Latin sinus, as the Greek κόλπος.

the Jews, from whom the phrase is borrowed, spoke of *all* true believers as going to Abraham, as being received into his bosom. To be in Abraham's bosom was equivalent with them to the being "in the garden of Eden," or "under the throne of glory," the being gathered into the general receptacle of happy, but waiting, souls\* (see Wisd. iii. 1-3). Language already existing among them received here the sanction and the seal of Christ, and has come thus to be accepted by the Church,† which has understood by it in like manner the state of painless expectation, of blissful repose, which should intervene between the death of the faithful in Christ Jesus, and their perfect consummation and bliss at his coming in his kingdom. It is the "Paradise" of Luke xxiii. 43; the place of the souls under the altar (Rev. vi. 9); it is, as some distinguish it, blessedness, but not glory.‡ Hither, to this haven of rest and consolation, Lazarus, after all his troubles, was safely borne.§

But "*the rich man also died and was buried,*"—it would appear, subsequently to Lazarus, so that, as has been noted, the mercy of God was manifest in the order of their deaths: Lazarus was more early exempted from the miseries of his earthly lot; Dives was allowed a longer time and space for

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\* See LIGHTFOOT's *Hor. Heb.* in loc.

† For ample quotations from the Greek Fathers, see SUICER's *Thes.* s. v. *κόλπος*. Augustine (*Ep.* 187) is worth referring to, and Tertullian (*De Animâ*, 58). Aquinas (*Sum. Theol.* pars. 3<sup>a</sup>, qu. 52, art. 2) gives the view of the middle ages; Cajetan, of the modern Romish Church; which, for good reasons of its own, has always depressed as much as possible the felicity of that middle state: *In limbo patrum erat consolatio, tum securitatis æternæ beatitudinis, tum sanctæ societatis, tum exemptionis ab omni pœnâ sensus*. Limborch (*Theol. Christ.* vi. 10, 8) has a striking passage, in which, starting from the scriptural phrase of death as a sleep, he compares the intermediate state of the good to a sweet and joyful dream, while the wicked are as men afflicted with horrible and frightful dreams, each being to waken on the reality of the things of which he has been dreaming; in this agreeing with Tertullian, who calls that state a *prælibatio sententiæ*.

‡ *Beatitudo*, but not *gloria*.

§ Augustine (*Serm.* 41): *Sarcina Christi, pennæ sunt. His pennis ille pauper in sinum Abrahæ volavit.*

repentance.\* But at last his day of grace came to an end; possibly the setting of Lazarus under his eye had been his final trial; his neglect of him the last drop that made the cup of God's long-suffering to run over. Entertaining him, he might have unawares entertained angels; but having let slip this latest opportunity, on the death of Lazarus follows hard, as would seem, his own; he "*also died, and was buried.*" There is a sublime irony, a stain upon all earthly glory, in this mention of his burial, connected as it is with what is immediately to follow. No doubt we are meant to infer that he had a splendid funeral, according to the most approved pomp of the world;† this splendid carrying of the forsaken tene-ment of clay to the grave is for him what the carrying into Abraham's bosom was for Lazarus; it is his equivalent, which, however, profits him nothing where now he is.‡

For death is for him an awakening from his flattering dream of ease and self-enjoyment upon the stern and terrible realities of eternity. He has sought to save his life, and has lost it. The play in which he acted the rich man is ended, and as he went off the stage, he was stripped bare of all the trappings with which he had been furnished, that he might

\* Thus Jeremy Taylor (*Sermon preached at the Funeral of the Lord Primate*): "According to the proverb of the Jews, 'Michael flies but with one wing, and Gabriel with two;' God is quick in sending angels of peace, and they fly apace, but the messengers of wrath come slowly: God is more hasty to glorify his servants than to condemn the wicked. And therefore in the story of Dives and Lazarus we find that the beggar died first; the good man Lazarus was first taken away from his misery to his comfort, and afterwards the rich man died."

† *Seculenter fucata*: Augustine.

‡ See for a noble passage on the rich man's burial Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. xlviii. 18*): *Spiritus torquetur apud inferos, quid illi prodest quia corpus jacet in cinnamio et aromatibus involutum pretiosis linteis? Tanquam si dominus domus mittatur in exilium, et tu ornas parietes ipsius. Ille in exilio eget, et fame deficit, vix sibi unam cellam invenit ubi somnum capiat, et tu dicis, Felix est, nam ornata est domus illius.* The whole exposition of the Psalm is full of interesting matter in regard of this parable. Cf. *Enarr. in Ps. xxxiii. 22*.—According to Jewish notions, it was this very burial which handed him over to his torments; for in the book Sohar it is said: *Anima quæ non est justa in hoc mundo permanet, donec corpus sepultum est, quo facto ipsa deducitur in gehennam.*

sustain his part: there remains only the fact that he has played it badly, and so will have no praise, but rather uttermost rebuke, from Him who allotted him the character to sustain.\*

From this verse the scene of the parable passes beyond the range of *our* experience into the unknown world of spirits; but not beyond the range of *his* eye, to whom both worlds, that and this, are alike open and manifest: He appears as

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\* Both these images, that of awakening from a dream of delight, and bringing to an end some proud part in a play, are used by Chrysostom to set forth the altered condition of the rich man after his death (*Ad Theod. Laps.* i. 8): "For as they who toil in the mines, or undergo some other penalty more terrible even than this, when perchance they fall asleep under their many labours and their most bitter existence, and in dreams behold themselves lapped in delights and in all rich abundance, yet after they are awakened owe no thanks to their dreams, so also that rich man, as in a dream being wealthy for this present life, after his migration hence was punished with that bitter punishment." And again (*De Laz. Conc.* 11): "For as on the stage some enter, assuming the masks of kings and captains, physicians and orators, philosophers and soldiers, being in truth nothing of the kind, so also in the present life, wealth and poverty are only masks. As then, when thou sittest in the theatre, and beholdest one playing below, who sustains the part of a king, thou dost not count him happy, nor esteemest him a king, nor desirest to be such as he; but knowing him to be one of the common people, a ropemaker or a blacksmith, or some such a one as this, thou dost not esteem him happy for his mask and his robe's sake, nor judgest of his condition from these, but holdest him cheap for the meanness of his true condition: so also, here sitting in the world as in a theatre, and beholding men playing as on a stage, when thou seest many rich, count them not to be truly rich, but to be wearing the masks of rich. For as he who on the stage plays the king or captain, is often a slave, or one who sells figs or grapes in the market, so also this rich man is often in reality poorest of all. For if thou strip him of his mask, and unfold his conscience, and scrutinize his inward parts, thou wilt there find a great penury of virtue, thou wilt find him to be indeed the most abject of men. And as in the theatre, when evening is come, and the spectators are departed, and the players are gone forth from thence, having laid aside their masks and their dresses, then they who before showed as kings and captains to all, appear now as they truly are; so now, when death approaches and the audience is dismissed, all laying aside the masks of wealth and of poverty depart from hence, and being judged only by their works, appear some indeed truly rich, but some poor; and some glorious, but others without honour." Cf. Augustine, *Serm.* cccxlv.—Arndt (*De Vero Christ.* i. 20) has a fine comparison to set forth the same truth. Of such as the rich man in our parable he says: Quos homines fortasse non, male camelis et mulis comparaveris; nam ut illi

much at home there as here; He moves in that world as with a perfect familiarity; speaking without astonishment, as of things which He knows. He still indeed continues to use the language of men, for it is the only language by which He could make Himself intelligible to men. Yet it is not always easy now to distinguish between what is merely figure, vehicle for truth, and what should be held fast as itself essential truth.\* We may safely say that the form in which the expression of pain, and of desire after alleviation, embodies itself, is figurative; even as the dialogue between Abraham and Dives belongs in the same way to the parabolical clothing of the truth. It is indeed the hope and longing after deliverance which alternately rises and is again crushed by the voice of the condemning law speaking in and through the conscience: as by the seeing of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, is conveyed to us the fact, that the misery of the wicked will be aggravated by the comparison which they will continually be making of their lost estate with the blessedness of the redeemed.

But to return; he that had that splendid funeral on earth is now "*in hell*,"—or "*in Hades*" rather; for as "*Abraham's*

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per rupes montiumque edita vestes sericas, gemmas, aromata, et generosa vina dorso vehentes, agmen quasi quoddam famulorum custodiæ et securitatis causâ secum trahunt; simulac vero circa vesperam in stabulum venerint, pretiosorum ornamentorum vestiumque pictarum apparatus illis detrahitur, jamque lassi et omni comitatu nudati nil nisi vibices et livida plagarum vestigia ostendant: ita qui in hoc mundo auro et serico nituerunt, obitûs extremâ vesperâ irruente, nihil habent præter vibices et cicatrices peccatorum per abusum divitiarum sibi impressas. Shakspeare has the same thought:

"If thou art rich, thou art poor,  
For like an ass whose back with ingots bows,  
Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,  
And death unloads thee."

\* There were some in Augustine's time that took all this to the letter, but *he* has more doubts and misgivings (*De Gen. ad Lit.* viii. 6): Sed quomodo intelligenda sit illa flamma inferni, ille sinus Abrahæ, illa lingua divitis, ille digitus pauperis, illa sitis tormenti, illa stilla refrigerii, vix fortasse a mansuete quærentibus, a contentiose autem certantibus nunquam, invenitur. Tertullian (*De Animâ*, 7) has of course taken it all literally.

*bosom*" is not heaven, though it will issue in heaven, so neither is Hades "*hell*," though to issue in it, when death and Hades shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the proper hell (Rev. xx. 14). It is the place of painful restraint,\* where the souls of the wicked are reserved to the judgment of the great day; it is "the deep," whither the devils prayed that they might not be sent to be tormented before their time (Luke viii. 31); for as that other and blessed place has a foretaste of heaven, so has this place a foretaste of hell. Dives, being there, is "*in torments*," stripped of all wherein his soul delighted and found its satisfaction; his purple robe has become a garment of fire;† as he himself describes it, he is "*tormented in this flame*."

For a while we may believe that he found it impossible to realize his present position, to connect his present self with his past; all for a season may have seemed to him only as some fearful dream. But when at length he had convinced himself that this was indeed no dream, but rather an awaking, then, and that he might take the measure of his actual condition, "*he lifted up his eyes, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*" (cf. Isai. lxx. 13, 14).—"And he cried and said, *Father Abraham*," for he still clung to the hope that his descent from Abraham, his fleshly privileges, would profit him something; he would plead that he has Abraham to his father, though it was indeed this which made his sin so great, his fall so deep. This, which was once his glory, is now the very stress of his guilt. That he, a son of Abraham,—the man of that liberal hand and princely heart, the man in whom, as the head of their great family, every Jew was reminded of his kinship with every other, of the one blood in their veins, of the one hope in God which ennobled them all from the least to the greatest,—should have so sinned against the

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\* Φυλακή (1 Pet. iii. 18)=ἄβυσσος (Luke viii. 31). Campbell (*On the Four Gospels*) has a long dissertation (vol. i. pp. 253-291) on the difference between ἄδης and γέεννα.

† Augustine (*Serm.* xxxvi. 6): Successit ignis purpuræ et bysso: eâ tunicâ ardebat, quâ se expoliare non poterat.

mighty privileges of his condition, should have so denied through his life all which the name "son of Abraham" was meant to teach him,—it was this which had brought him to that place of torment. Nor does Abraham deny the relationship (ver. 25), while yet, coupling as he does the admission of it with a refusal of his request, he indeed rings the knell of his latest hope. Poor and infinitely slight was the best alleviation which he had looked for; it amounted but to this: "*Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame;*" it was but a drop of water on his fiery tongue! So shrunken are his desires, so low is the highest hope which even he himself ventures to entertain.\* Nothing else could mark so strongly how far he has fallen, how conscious he has himself become of the depth of his fall. In this prayer of the rich man we have the only invocation of saints in Scripture, and certainly not a very encouraging one. He can speak of "*father Abraham*" and his "*father's house*," but there is another Father of whom he will know nothing—the Father whom the Prodigal had found. For he is as far as hell is from heaven from the faith of the prophet: "Doubtless *thou art our Father*, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not."

The pity which he refused to show, he fails to obtain. We have here the reverse of the beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." With what measure he meted, it is measured to him again. The crumbs which *he* denied, now issue in the drop of water which is denied *to him*.† Here is one who has not made himself "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;" and now that he has failed, he has none to "receive" him "into everlasting habitations." That Abraham's reply contains such a refusal of his petition

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\* Augustine: *Superbus temporis, mendicus inferni*.

† Augustine: *Desideravit guttam, qui non dedit micam*; a thought which makes Gregory the Great exclaim (*Hom. 40 in Evang.*): *O quanta est subtilitas judiciorum Dei!* And Bengel observes: *Linguâ maxime peccârat*.



is clear; yet it is not so certain what exact meaning we shall attribute to his words: "*Thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things.*" There are two explanations; the first and commonest would make "*thy good things*" to signify, temporal felicities; these, which were goods to him, which he esteemed the highest goods, so that he would know of no other, he received; and Abraham's reply would then be this: "Son, thou hadst thy choice, the things eternal, or the things temporal, this life, or that other; thou didst choose that other, the fleeting and the temporary: but now, when that is run through, it is idle to think of recalling thy choice, and having even the slightest portion in this life also." But the other explanation, which would make "*thy good things*" to be good actions or good qualities, such as in some small measure Dives possessed, and for which he received in this life his reward, I cannot give better than in the words of Bishop Sanderson: \* "If thou hadst anything good in thee, remember thou hast had thy reward in earth already, and now there remaineth for thee nothing but the full punishment of thine ungodliness there in hell: but as for Lazarus, he hath had the chastisement of his infirmities [his '*evil things*'] on earth already, and now remaineth for him nothing but the full reward of his godliness here in heaven." Presently before Sanderson had said, "For as God rewardeth those few good things that are in evil men with these temporal benefits, for whom yet in his justice He reserveth eternal damnation, as the due wages, by that justice, of their graceless impenitency, so He punisheth those remnants of sin that are in godly men with these temporal afflictions, for whom yet in his mercy He reserveth eternal salvation, as the due wages, yet by that mercy only, of their faith and repentance and holy obedience." This was Chrysostom's view of the passage; † and Gregory the Great, who

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\* In a Sermon on Ahab's repentance (1 Kin. xxi. 29).

† *De Laz. Con.* 8. He lays a stress on the ἀπέλαβες, *recepisti*, not *accepisti*; see too Theophylact (in loc.). Certainly the five other passages of St. Luke, in which ἀπόλαμβάνειν occurs (vi. 34, twice; xv. 27; xviii. 30; xxiii. 41), quite bear him out in his remark.

in general follows Augustine,\* has here an independent exposition, and strongly maintains this meaning of the words,† which has certainly something to commend it.

But whether there be in the words such a meaning or not, this is in them, as in so many other passages of Scripture, namely, that the receiving of this world's good without any portion of its evil, the course of an unbroken prosperity, is ever a sign and augury of ultimate reprobation‡ (Ps. xvii. 14; Luke vi. 24, 25). Nor is the reason of this hard to perceive: for there being in every man a large admixture of that dross which has need to be purged out, and which can only be purged out by the fire of pain and affliction, he who is not cast into this fire, is left with all his dross in him, with his evil unpurged; and therefore can be no partaker of that holiness without which no man shall see God. Thus Dives to his endless loss had in this life received good things without any share of evil.§ But now all is changed: Lazarus, who received in this mortal life evil things, is comforted, but Dives is tormented. He had sown only to the flesh, and therefore, when the order of things has commenced in which

\* Augustine's exclamation here, *O mundi bona, apud inferos mala!* shows that the other explanation was his.

† *Hom. 40 in Evang.*: Dum dicitur, *Recepisti bona in vitâ tuâ* indicatur et dives iste boni aliquid habuisse, ex quo in hac vitâ bona recipere. Iterumque dum de Lazaro dicitur, quia recepit mala, profecto monstratur et Lazarus habuisse malum aliquod, quod purgaretur. Sed illum paupertas afflixit et tersit, istum abundantia remuneravit et repulit. Cf. *Moral.* v. 1. In like manner the Jewish doctors said: Quemadmodum in seculo futuro piis rependitur præmium boni operis etiam levissimi, quod perpetrarunt, ita in seculo hoc rependitur impiis præmium cujuscunque levissimi boni operis,—a saying which Gfrörer (*Urchristenthum*, vol. ii p. 171) applies here.

‡ Augustine. Quid infelicius felicitate peccantium?

§ Thus in the Jewish books the scholar of an eminent Rabbi found his master one day in extreme affliction and pain, and began to laugh, while all the other scholars were weeping round him. Being upbraided for this, he answered, that while he saw in times past his master in such uninterrupted prosperity, he had often feared lest he was receiving his portion in this world; but now seeing him so afflicted, he took courage again, and believed that his good things were still to come (MEUSCHEN'S *N. T. ex Talm. illust.* p. 66).

the flesh has no part, he can only reap in misery and emptiness, in the hungry longing and unsatisfied desire of the soul.

Moreover, besides that law of retaliation, which requires that the unmerciful should not receive mercy, the fact is brought home to the conscience of this man, once so rich, and now so poor, that with death the separation of the elements of good and evil, elements which in this world are mingled and confounded, begins. Like is gathered to like, good by natural affinity to good, and evil to evil. And this separation is permanent: "*Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed,*" not a mere handbreadth only, as the Jews fabled, but "*a great gulf,*" and not merely there, but "*fixed*"\* there,—an eternal separation, a yawning chasm, too deep to be filled up, too wide to be bridged over, so that there is no passing from one side to the other; "*They who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.*" Now the latter affirmation is easily intelligible, for we can quite understand the lost desiring to pass out of their state of pain to the place of rest and blessedness, but it is not so easy to understand the reverse—"they who would pass from hence to you cannot." The desire of such a passing could not, of course, be for the purpose of changing their condition: but they cannot pass, Abraham would say, even for a season; they have no power to yield even a moment's solace to any in that place, however they may desire it. Yet here the difficulty suggests itself, Can they, being full of love, otherwise than greatly desire it? Nay, is not such a longing implied in the very words of Abraham? And if they do thus greatly desire this thing, which yet is unattainable, must not this desire trouble and cast a shade even upon a heavenly felicity? a difficulty which must wait for its solution; for all the answers which commonly are given do not reach it.

But though repulsed for himself, he has still a request to

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\* Augustine (*Ad Evod. Ep.* 164): *Hiatus . . . non solum est, verum etiam firmatus est.*

urge for others. If Abraham cannot send Lazarus to that world of woe, at least he can cause him to return to the earth which he has so lately quitted; between these worlds there is no such gulf intervening: "*I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*" He and they, Sadducees at heart, though it might have been Pharisees in name, perhaps oftentimes had mocked together at that unseen world which now he was finding so fearful a reality;\* and that it was such, he would now desire by Lazarus to warn them. Lazarus will be able to "*testify,*" to speak, that is, of things which he has seen.† In this anxiety for his brethren's good, which he, who hitherto had been merely selfish, expresses, some have found the evidence of a better mind beginning, and the proof that suffering was already doing its work in him, and awakening in him the slumbering germ of good.‡ With this view, were it the right one, would of necessity be connected his own ultimate restoration, and the whole doctrine of future suffering not being vindictive and eternal, but corrective and temporary; a doctrine which will always find favour with all those who have no deep insight into the evil of sin, no earnest view of the task and responsibilities of life; especially when, as too often, they are bribed to hold it by a personal interest, by a lurking consciousness that they themselves are not earnestly striving to enter at the strait gate, that their own standing in

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\* Augustine (*Serm.* xli.): Non dubito quia cum ipsis fratribus suis loquens de prophetis monentibus bona, prohibentibus mala, terrentibus de tormentis futuris, et futura præmia promittentibus, irridebat hæc omnia, dicens cum fratribus suis, Quæ vita post mortem? quæ memoria putredinis? qui sensus cineris? . . . quis inde reversus auditus est?

† In the legend of Er the Pamphylian (PLATO, *Pol.* 10), he is to return from the place where souls are judged, ἀγγελον ἀνθρώποις γενέσθαι τῶν ἐκεῖ, of the greatness of the rewards of the just, the dreadfulness of the doom of sinners.

‡ Aquinas (*Sum. Theol. Supp. ad 3<sup>m</sup> part.* qu. 98, art. 4) has a discussion to which this verse gives occasion: Utrum damnati in inferno vellent alios esse damnatos, qui non sunt damnati? He determines, despite this passage, that they would.

Christ is insecure or none. But the rich man's request grows out of another root. There lies in it a secret justifying of himself, and accusing of God. What a bitter reproach against God and against the old economy is here involved: "If only I had been sufficiently warned, if only God had given me sufficiently clear evidence of these things, of the need of repentance, of this place as the goal of a sensual worldly life, I had never come hither. But though I was not, let, at any rate, my brethren be duly warned." Abraham's answer is brief and almost stern; rebuking, as was fit, this evil thought of his heart. "*They are warned: they have enough to keep them from your place of torment, if only they will use it. They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them.*" Our Lord then gives no countenance to their notion, who see an entire keeping back of the doctrine of life eternal and an after retribution in the Pentateuch, but to "*hear Moses,*" was to hear of these things; as elsewhere more at length He showed (Matt. xxii. 31, 32).

But the suppliant will not so easily be put to silence. "*Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*" As it is true of the faithful, that "*their works do follow them,*" and that their temper here is their temper in heaven, so not less does the contempt of God's word, which this man manifested on earth, follow him beyond the grave;\* that word, as he deems, is not sufficient to save men; they must have something more to lead them to repentance. We have here reappearing in hell that "*Show us a sign, that we may believe,*" which was so often on the lips of the Pharisees on earth. They will believe, or at least flatter themselves that they would believe, signs and portents, but they will not believe God's word (Isai. viii. 19, 20). A vain expectation! for, in Abraham's words, "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*" These words demand to be accurately

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\* Bengel: Vilipendium Scripturæ miser, relicto luxu, secum intulit in inferno.

weighed. Dives had said, "*they will repent*;" a moral change will be wrought in them; Abraham replies, they will not even "*be persuaded*." Dives had said, "*if one went unto them from the dead*;" Abraham, with a prophetic glance at the world's unbelief in far greater matter, makes answer, "Nó, not if *one rose from the dead*." He in fact is saying: "A far greater act than you demand would be ineffectual for producing a far slighter effect; you suppose that wicked men would *repent* on the return of a spirit: I tell you they would not even *be persuaded* by the rising of one from the dead."\*

This reply of Abraham's is most weighty for the insight it gives us into the nature of faith, as a moral act, an act of the will and the affections no less than of the understanding; which cannot therefore be forced by signs and miracles: for where there is a determined alienation of the will and affections, from the truth, no impression which these miracles will make, even if they be allowed to be genuine, will be more than transitory. Nor will there fail to be always a loophole somewhere or other, by which unbelief can escape;† which is well, else we should have in the Church the faith of devils, who believe and tremble. When the historical Lazarus was raised from the dead, the Pharisees were not by this miracle persuaded of the divine mission and authority of Him who had raised him, and yet they did not deny the reality of the miracle itself (John xi. 47; xii. 10). A greater too than Lazarus has returned from the world of spirits; nay, has risen from the dead: and what multitudes who acknowledge the fact, and acknowledge it as setting a seal to all his claims

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\* It is a pity that we have not given the *ἐάν τις* of ver. 31, "*if one*," as we have rightly done in the verse preceding. Observe the change of words *πορευθῆ* in the request of Dives; *ἀναστῆ* in the reply of Abraham; *ἀπὸ νεκρῶν* in the request; *ἐκ νεκρῶν* in the reply.

† When, for instance, Spinoza declared himself ready to renounce his system and to become a Christian, if only he were convinced of the truth of the raising of the historical Lazarus, he knew very well that in his sense of the word *convince*, and with the kind of evidence that he would have required, it was impossible to satisfy his demand (see BAYLE, *Diction.* art. Spinoze, note B).

to be heard and obeyed, yet are not brought by this acknowledgment at all nearer to repentance and the obedience of faith. And it is very observable, how exactly in the spirit of Abraham's refusal to send Lazarus, the Lord Himself acted after his resurrection. He showed Himself, not to the Pharisees, not to his enemies, "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God" (Acts x. 41), to his own disciples alone. It was a judgment on the others, that no sign should be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonah (Matt. xii. 39); yet it was a mercy also, for they would not have been persuaded, even by one that had risen from the dead. At the same time it is not to be denied that in Christ's resurrection there was a satisfaction of the longing of man's heart, that one should return from the world beyond the grave, and give assurance of the reality of that world,—a longing which Abraham could not satisfy, but which Christ did, when He died and rose again, and appeared unto men, having the keys of death and of Hades.\*

It remains only to give a rapid sketch of their interpretation, who maintain that, besides its literal, the parable has also an allegorical meaning;—though of these some find this only by the way, and as something merely subordinate, an interpretation which they propose, and then leave to every one to allow it what value he chooses: while others make the great scope of the parable to be the setting forth of the relations between Jew and Gentile. Dives then, as already has been said, represents the Jewish nation, clad in the "purple" of the

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\* Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. cxlvii. 14*): O Domine, gratias misericordie tue; voluisti mori, ut aliquis ab inferis surgeret, et ipse aliquis non quicumque, sed Veritas surrexit ab inferis. In Plato's legend of the *revenant*, alluded to already (p. 473, note), there is a remarkable witness for this craving in the mind of man, that he who gives assurance of the reality of the things after death should have himself returned from the world of spirits,—a longing that for us has found its satisfaction in the resurrection of Christ. The same reappears in that, which, however, is plainly but an imitation of Plato's narrative, the story of Thespesius in Plutarch's essay, *De serâ Numinis Vindictâ*.

king, and the "*fine linen*" of the priest\*—the kingdom of priests, or royal priesthood.† They fared sumptuously every day, they were amply furnished with all spiritual blessings: "enriched," as Theophylact explains it, "with all knowledge and wisdom, and with the precious oracles of God." They were the vineyard which the Lord had planted, and of which He could say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isai. v. 2, 4.) They were the people whom He had made to ride on the high places of the earth, and to whom pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." But all these things were given them, not that they might make their boast of them, and rest there, comparing themselves for self-exaltation with the heathen round them, who were perishing without the knowledge of God, but that they might spread around them the true faith and knowledge of God. Yet they did not this: "Behold," said St. Paul, "thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness." But meanwhile, though they thus boasted, they did nothing effectual to scatter the darkness of the heathen; for they had mistaken their true glory; and had turned this talent of talents,

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\* Augustine (*Quæst. Evang.* ii. qu. 38): In divite intelligantur superbi Judæorum, ignorantes Dei justitiam, et suam volentes constituere . . . Epulatio splendida, jactantia legis est, in quâ gloriabantur plus ad pompam electionis abutentes eâ, quam ad necessitatem salutis utentes. Cf. Gregory the Great (*Hom.* 40 in *Evang.*, and *Moral.* xxv. 13), and H. de Sto. Victore (*Annot. in Luc.*): Dives iste Judaicum populum designat, qui cultum vitæ exterius habuit, et acceptæ legis deliciis usus est ad nitorem, non ad utilitatem. Theophylact: Πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον ἐνεδέδυτο, βασιλείαν ἔχων καὶ ἱερωσύνην. He refers the faring sumptuously every day to the daily sacrifice. In modern times Lomeier has wrought out this view at length, *Obs. Analytico-Didact. ad Luc.* xvi. p. 91, seq. See VON MEYER'S *Blätter für höhere Wahrheit*, vol. vi. p. 88, for an exposition not historically the same, but agreeing with the spirit of this one.

† Βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα, Exod. xix. 6; cf. 1 Pet. ii. 9.



the knowledge of the true God, these privileges, and this election, into a selfish thing. They counted that God had blessed them *alone* of all people, instead of, as was the truth, *above* all people; that all other people in fact were *curled* for their sake; they stopped the blessing, of which they should have been the channel, and through them the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles; He was presented to the Gentiles under a false character and in an unworthy light.\*

Meanwhile Lazarus the beggar† lay at their gate covered with sores;—at the gate and without it, for the Gentiles were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise:”—“*full of sores,*” for their sins and their miseries were infinite. These sores of the Gentile world are enumerated by St. Paul, Rom. i. 23-32; though the term will include, besides the sins, the penal miseries consequent on those sins. But these sores, these “wounds and bruises and putrefying sores,” were neither closed, nor bound, nor mollified with ointment, so that the dogs came and licked them. Here, as must so often happen, there is a question whether this last circumstance has any distinct signification, or is added only to complete the picture. Are there indicated here the slight and miserable assuagements of its wants and woes,—the wretched medicine for its hurts, which the heathen world derived from its poets and philosophers and legislators? or may it be meant that even in this depth of man’s misery, nature spake to him, in faint and feeble accents, of mercy and love (Acts xiv, 17), and evidently sympathized with man, so that he found comfort in her sympathy? But the other circumstance has plainly a meaning, namely, that the beggar desired to be fed from the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. It cannot, indeed, be said that the Gentiles directly desired the satisfaction of their spiritual hunger

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\* H. de Sto. Victore: Non ad caritatem sed ad elationem doctrinam legis habuit. And Gregory (*Hom.* 40) explains the refusal of the crumbs: Gentiles ad cognitionem legis, superbi Judæi non admittebant.

† Theophylact: Πένης θείων χαρίτων καὶ σοφίας.

from the Jews, for we know this, from one cause or other, was not in a very great degree the case; though indeed the spread of Judaism, and the inclination which existed to embrace it, is more than once noted by the Roman writers in the times of the first emperors.\* But the yearning of their souls after something better and truer than aught which they possessed, was, in fact, a yearning after that which the Jew did possess, and which, had he been faithful to his privileges and his position, he would certainly have imparted. Christ was "the Desire of *all* nations;" every yearning after deliverance from the bondage of sin and corruption, which found utterance in the heart of any heathen, was in truth a yearning after Him; so that *implicitly* and unconsciously the heathen was desiring to be fed from the Jew's table, desiring from thence an alleviation of his wants, but desiring it in vain.

The dying of Lazarus, with his reception into Abraham's bosom, will find their counterpart in the abolition of that economy under which the Gentile was an outcast from the covenant, and in his subsequent entrance into all the immunities and consolations of the kingdom of God;—"which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. i. 10; Ephes. ii. 11-13). But Dives dies also; the Jewish economy comes to an end; and now Dives is in torments,—"*in hell*;" surely not too strong a phrase to describe the misery and despair, the madness and blindness and astonishment of heart, which are the portion of a people, that, having once known God, fall from that knowledge,—of an apostate and God-abandoned people. The fundamental idea of hell is exclusion from the presence of God; and this utter exclusion was the portion of that people upon whom his wrath came to the uttermost. Who can read the history of the latter days of the Jewish nation, a history providentially preserved to us even in its minutest details, of the time when that nation seemed to realize the fable of the scorpion girdled with fire,

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\* See NEANDER'S *History of the Church*, vol. i. p. 84 (English transl.).

and fixing its sting in its own body, and not feel that all which really constitutes hell was already there? Nay, and ever since have they not been "*in torments*"? In proof, let us turn to that sure word of prophecy, which foretells their doom should they fall away, as they have fallen away, from their God; for instance, to Lev. xxvi. 14-39, or Deut. xxviii. 15-68; or call to mind the Lord's words, which speak of the weeping and gnashing of teeth which shall be their portion, when they see the despised Gentiles coming from the east and the west, from the north and from the south, and sitting down in the kingdom of God, while they themselves are thrust out\* (Luke xiii. 28-30). But as Dives looked for some consolation from Lazarus, whom before he despised, so the Jew is looking for the assuagement of his miseries through some bettering of his outward estate,—some relaxation of severities inflicted upon him,—some improvement of his civil condition,—things which he looks for from the kingdoms of the world, and which if they gave him, would be but as a drop of water on the burning tongue. He knows not that the wrath of God in truth constitutes his misery; and so long as this is unre-moved, he is incapable of true comfort. The alleviation which he craves is not given, it were in vain to give it; the one true alleviation would be that he should be himself received into the kingdom of God, that he should bewail his guilt, and look on Him whom he pierced, and mourn because of Him: then consolations would abound to him; but without this, everything else is but as a drop of water on the fiery tongue. That there is no allusion in the parable to any future time, when the great gulf of unbelief which now separates the Jew from his blessings shall be filled up, makes nothing against this interpretation; since exactly the same argument might be applied, and we know incorrectly, to call in-question the ordinary explanation of the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen; nothing is there said of the vineyard being restored to its first cultivators, which yet we know will one day be the case.

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\* Theophylact: Ἐν τῇ φλογὶ κατακαίονται τοῦ φθόνου

By the five brethren of Dives will be set forth to us, according to this scheme, all who hereafter, in a like condition and with like advantages, are tempted to the same abuse of their spiritual privileges. The Gentile Church is in one sense Lazarus brought into Abraham's bosom; but when it sins as the Jewish Church did before it, glorying in its gifts, but not using them for the calling out of the spiritual life of men, contented to see in its very bosom a population that is outcast, save in name, from its privileges and blessings, and to see beyond its limits millions of heathens to whom it has little or no care to impart the knowledge of Christ and of his salvation,—then, in so far as it thus sins, it is only too like the five brethren of Dives, who are in danger of coming with him, and for sins similar to his, to this place of torment. Nor are we to imagine that, before judgment is executed upon a Church thus forgetful of its high calling, it will be roused from its dream of security by any startling summonses,—any novel signs and wonders,—any new revelation,—any Lazarus rising from the dead, and bidding it to repent. It has enough to remind it of its duty; it has its deposit of truth,—its talent wherewith it was bidden to trade till its Lord's return. So that the latter part of the parable, thus contemplated, speaks to us Gentiles in the very spirit of those awful words which St. Paul addressed to the Gentile converts at Rome: "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. xi. 22).

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## PARABLE XXVII.

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### UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS.

LUKE xvii. 7-10.

SOME interpreters find a connexion between this parable and the discourse which precedes it; while others affirm that no such can be traced, that the parable must be explained without any reference to the saying concerning faith which goes immediately before. Theophylact supposes this to be the link between the parable and the preceding verse;—the Lord had there declared the great things which a living faith would enable his disciples to perform, so that they should remove mountains; but then, lest these great things which were in the power of their faith should entangle them in a snare of pride, the parable was spoken for the purpose of keeping them humble.\* Augustine confesses the difficulty of tracing the connexion, and has a very singular explanation of the whole parable, which I must be content to refer to,† as it would take up considerable space to do it justice. Olshausen gives this explanation: The Apostles by that account which went before of the hindrances they would meet in their work (ver. 1, 2), of the hard duties, hard as they then seemed to them, which were required of them (ver. 3, 4), had a longing awakened in them after a speedier reward. The Lord therefore would set before them their true relation to Him; that their work, difficult or not, welcome or unwelcome, must be done; that they were not their own, but his, and to labour for Him: if they found their labour a delight, well; but if not, still it was to be

\* So Cajetan: Petierant Apostoli adjungi sibi donum confidentiæ, quod et eis collatum intelligitur. Et quoniam etiam superbia bonis operibus insidiatur ut pereant, ideo Jesus adjungit parabolam conservativam eorum in verâ recognitione suimet, ne extollantur.

† *Quest. Evang.* ii. 39. Maldonatus, who denies that there is any connexion, thinks Augustine's very forced and unnatural.

accomplished. They were not to look for their reward and release from toil straightway and at once; but rather to take example of the servant, who though he had been strenuously labouring all the day long in the field, "*ploughing or feeding cattle*," yet not the less, when he returned home, had to continue his labours in the house also. Such is his explanation, and no doubt he here asserts an important truth, and one found in the parable; but to the connexion, as he traces it, there is this objection, that the request, "*Lord, increase our faith*," does not seem to convey any such meaning as he finds in it; there is no appearance as if those who made it were desirous of escaping a dispensation committed to them, or snatching prematurely at a reward. Other expositors have neglected to seek any immediate connexion between the parable and the context in which it is found, have been contented to affirm that it teaches generally how God is debtor to no man; that all we can do is of duty, nothing of merit; and that in all our work we must retain the acknowledgment of this, and carefully guard against all vain-glory and elation of heart; since rather we must be deeply humbled before God out of the thought that, did we do all, we should only do what we were bound to; and how then must it be, when we fall so infinitely short of that all?

But wholly different from any of these interpretations is that first formally proposed, if I mistake not, by Grotius, and which Venema\* has taken up and strengthened with additional arguments and illustrations. The parable, they say, is not meant to represent at all the standing of the faithful under the new covenant, "*the perfect law of liberty*," but the merely servile standing of the Jew under the old, and it grew in this manner out of the discourse preceding. The disciples had asked for increase of faith. The Lord in answer would teach them the necessity and transcendent value of that gift for which they were asking, would magnify its value, showing them how all outward works done without this living principle

\* *Diss. Sac.* p. 262, seq.

of free and joyful obedience, such as for the most part the men of their own nation were content with, were merely servile, and were justly recompensed with a merely servile reward;—that in those works God could take no pleasure, and for them counted that He owed no thanks; the servants who did them were after all unprofitable and of no account in his sight.

The arguments of Grotius and Venema are mainly these. They object to the common interpretation, that it sets forth under a wrong aspect the relations which exist between Christ and his people. They ask, Is it likely that the gracious Lord who in another place said, "Henceforth I call you not servants, . . but I have called you friends," would here wish to bring forward in so strong a light the service done to Him as one merely servile, and for which He would render them no thanks? Would He, who ever sought to lead his disciples into the recognition of their filial relation to God, as those that had received not the spirit of bondage but of adoption, here throw them back so strongly on their servile relation? It was, they say, in quite another spirit that He spake those words, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, *that he shall gird himself*, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke xii. 37). While these difficulties beset the parable interpreted in the ordinary way, it does, they affirm, on the contrary exactly set forth the relation of the Jews, at least of the greater number of them, to God. They were hired to do a certain work, which if they did, they were, like servants, free from stripes; they had too their stipend; they ate and drank; they received their earthly reward. But going no further than this bare fulfilling of the things expressly enjoined\* them, and fulfilling them without love or zeal or the filial spirit of faith, contented to stop short when

\* Exactly the same stress which they would here lay on *τὰ διαραχθέντα* is laid by Origen (*In Rom.* iii.), although his purpose, as will be seen, is different: *Donec quis hoc facit tantum quod debet, i. e. ea quæ præcepta sunt, inutilis servus est* (*Luc.* xvii. 10). *Si autem addas*

they had just done so much as would enable them, as they hoped, to escape punishment, going through their work in this temper, they were "*unprofitable servants*," in whom the Lord could take no pleasure, and who could look for no further marks of favour at his hands.\*

It is not to be denied that there is something attractive in this exposition ;† it is well worthy of respectful consideration.

aliquid præceptis, tunc non jam inutilis servus eris, sed dicetur ad te : Euge serve bone et fidelis (Matt. xxv. 21). St. Bernard too (*In Cant. Serm.* xi. 2), without indeed making Origen's dangerous use of the passage, and lowering the standard of obedience for the ninety-nine, in the hope of exalting it for the one, has implicitly the same explanation of the passage as that mentioned in the text. Expounding Cant. i. 2, he has occasion to speak of a service, rendered indeed, but without joy and alacrity and delight, and ends thus : Denique in Evangelio qui hoc solum, quod facere debet, facit, servus inutilis reputatur. Mandata forsân utcumque adimpleo : sed anima mea sicut terra sine aquâ in illis. Ut igitur holocaustum meum piugue fiat, osculetur me, quæso, osculo oris sui. So too Jeremy Taylor, *The Doctrine and Practice of Repentance*, i. 4, 15.

\* Grotius (in loc.) is especially rich in materials in support of this interpretation of the parable. From Maïmonides he quotes a Jewish proverb, Εἰ δατὺρ πρᾶμιὺν κὺι κὺδ ἰνὺσσὺς φακί; and from Chrysostom (*In Rom.* viii.) a passage contrasting the obedience of the Jew and the Christian: *Κἀκεῖνοι δὲ φόβῳ τιμωρίας πάντα ἐπραττον ἀγόμενοι, οἱ δὲ πνευματικοὶ ἐπιθυμία καὶ πόθῳ, καὶ τοῦτο δηλοῦσι τῷ καὶ ὑπερβαίνειν τὰ ἐπιτάγματα*. We might compare, especially with that Jewish proverb, one of the Similitudes in the *Shepherd* of Hermas (iii. sim. 5), which is briefly this : A householder planted a vineyard, and going from home, left his servant the task of tying the vines to their supports, and no more, but the servant having finished this task, thought it would profit the vineyard, if also he were to weed it and dig it, which he did ; and the master found it in high order and beauty on his return. Well pleased with his servant, because he had thus done more than was enjoined him, he determined to give him the adoption of sonship, and to make him fellow-heir with his own son. It is true that Hermas makes an application of the similitude different from what one would expect, and not bearing upon our parable, but yet the passage is in itself remarkable. Seneca (*De Benef.* iii. 18-28) treats an interesting question which bears on the present subject : An beneficium dare domino servus possit? which he answers in the affirmative : Quamdiu præstatur quod a servis exigi solet [*τὰ διαταχθέντα*] ministerium est, ubi plus quam quod servo necesse est, beneficium : ubi in affectum amici transit, desinit vocari ministerium . . . Quicquid est quod servilis officii formulam excedit, quod non ex imperio sed et voluntate præstatur, beneficium est. He has much more on the subject.

† It is Wetstein's also : Sunt nimirum servi qui serviunt serviliter,



Yet might it be fairly replied in this way to their arguments who uphold it. The present parable need not be opposed to, but rather should be balanced with, that other saying of the Lord's (Luke xii. 37) quoted above; it should be considered as supplying the counterweight of all such declarations. This is the way God *might* deal; for we may observe, it is not said that this is the way He *will* deal; since rather that other is the manner in which He will actually bear Himself towards his faithful servants. The one relation is that which according to the strictness of justice He *might* assume, the other is that which according to the riches of his grace He *will* assume. We, to keep us humble, are evermore to acknowledge that upon that footing He might put our relation to Him, having, at the same time, this assurance, that so long as we put it upon that footing, He will not; because so long, we are capable of receiving his favours without being corrupted by them. It is only to the humble, to the self-abased before God, that He *can* give grace; for where this humility is not, it is certain that, as the unclean vessel will altogether taint the wine poured into it, so the gifts of God will be perverted to spiritual wickedness, more dangerous and more deadly than the natural corruptions of man's heart. And although, doubtless, the relation of the Christian to his Lord is set forth here under somewhat a severer\* aspect than is usual under the New Covenant, yet the experience of every heart will bear witness how needful it is that this side of the truth, as well as the other, should be set out,—that in hours when we are tempted to draw back, to

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hoc est, qui nil nisi jussi faciunt: alii serviunt liberaliter, ut filii qui, non expectato mandato, ex generosâ et nobili indole, sponte et injussi ea faciunt, quæ utilia et Domino placitura credunt. Illos Christus hic persurgit et vituperat eo fine ut discipulos ad altiorem gradum perducat.

\* At the same time, our translators have made it wear even a severer aspect than is need, rendering *ἔχει χάριν κ. τ. λ.*, "*Doth he thank that servant?*" and thus seeming to cut off any recognition at all of the servant's work. It would be better, "*Doth he count himself especially beholden to that servant?*" as Weisse gives it: *Weiss er dem Knecht besondern Dank?* So Heb. xii. 28, *ἔχωμεν χάριν*, which should be translated, "*Let us have the thankfulness.*" See TITTMAN'S *Synonyms*, s. v. *ἀχρεῖος*.

shun and to evade our tasks, we should then feel that a necessity is laid upon us; that, indeed, while we do them willingly, we do them also the most acceptably, yet whether willingly or not, they must be done; that we are servants who are not to question our Master's will, but to fulfil it. Good for us it is that we should have the check of considerations like these upon us in such moments, and should thus be kept in the way of duty, till the time of a more joyful and childlike obedience again comes round. This fear does not exclude love, but is its true guardian: they mutually support and uphold one another;\* for our hearts, while yet they are not "made perfect in love," are not such that they can be presented with motives drawn *only* from gratitude and love. These, indeed, must ever be the chief and prominent motives to obedience (Rom. xii. 1), and so long as they prove sufficient, the others will not appear; but it is well for us that behind these there should be other sterner and severer summonses to duty, ready to come forward and make themselves felt, when our evil and our corruption cause them to be needed. Well for us, too, is it, that while the Lord is pleased graciously to accept our work and to reward it, we should ever be reminded that it is an act of his free grace, of his unmerited mercy, by which our relation to Him has been put upon this footing. For there is also another footing (that of the parable) upon which it might have been put,—yea, upon which though *He* does not, yet *we* must evermore put it, so far at least as is needful for the subduing every motion of pride and vain-glory, every temptation to bring in God as our debtor because of our work,—which, inconceivable as it must appear when we calmly contemplate the matter, is yet what men are evermore doing, or on the point of doing.†

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\* Guerrius (BERNARDI *Opp.* vol. ii. p. 1028, ed. Bened.): Neque enim timor iste quem amor castum facit, gaudium tollit, sed custodit; non destruit, sed instruit; non inamaricat, sed condit: ut tanto sit durabilis, quanto modestius, tanto verius, quanto severius, tanto dulcius, quanto sanctius.

† Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* viii. 32): Agnosce esse te servum plurimis obsequiis defœneratum. Non te præferas, quia filius Dei diceris:

A more real difficulty in the parable, as it appears to me, is this, that of the first part of it (ver. 7, 8) the purpose seems, to commend patience in the Lord's work,—that we do not desire to be dismissed before the time from our labours, or snatch too early at the reward ; but rather take example from the hind, who only looks to rest and refresh himself, when his master has no further need of his service; that, in the words of the son of Sirach (Ecclus. xi. 20), we learn to “wax old in our work,” and, so long as we are here, see in one task completed but a stepping-stone to another which shall be begun. Such appears the lesson of the first part of the parable,—that we do not, after we have made some exertion, smaller or greater, account that we have a claim to be exempted henceforth from strenuous toil ; but ever, on the contrary, as we have surmounted one hill of labour, perceive a new one rising above it, and gird ourselves for the surmounting of that also. But in the second part (ver. 9, 10) it is no longer this patient continuance in well-doing, but humility, that is enjoined, the confession that we are not doing God a favour in serving Him, but that all we can do is of merest duty, that our service at best is poor, and as it must be of little value in his eyes, so ought it to be of little in our own. I suppose, however, the solution is, that impatience under deferred reward, with the desire to be released from labour, springs from over-estimation of our work ; while he who feels that all which he has yet done is little, that it is all poor and mean, as he will not count that it gives him a claim henceforward to be exempted from labour, but will rather desire some new field of labour where he may approve himself a better servant than he has yet been, so neither will he count that it gives him a right to consider God as his debtor. The two wrong states of mind, springing from the same evil root, are to be met by the same remedy, by the

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*agnoscenda gratia, sed non ignoranda natura. Neque te jactes si bene servisti, quod facere debuisti. Obsequitur sol, obtemperat luna, serviunt angeli. . . . Et nos ergo non a nobis laudem exigamus, nec præcipiamus judicium Dei et præveniamus sententiam judicis : sed suo tempori, suo judici reservemus.*

learning to know what our actual relation to God is,—that it is one of servants to a master; and being such, it precludes us alike from all right of claiming release when we please, and so also from all right to extol or exalt ourselves for the doing of that, which, by the very laws of our condition, we are bound to,—which not to do were a great guilt, but which to do is no merit.

On the details of the parable there is not much to remark. All are aware that the waiting at table with the dress *succinct*, or girded up, was a mark of servitude,\* which to keep in mind makes more wonderful the condescension of the Son of God in his saying, Luke xii. 37, and in his doing, John xiii. 4. With regard to the confession which He puts into the mouths of his disciples,† “*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say,‡ We are unprofitable servants;*” we may truly observe, as many have observed before, if this they are to say when they have done all, how much more, and with how far deeper self-abasement and shame, when their consciences bear them witness, as his conscience must bear witness to every man, that so far from having done all that was commanded, they have in innumerable things grievously failed and come short of their duty, of what they might and ought to have done.§

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\* Venema quotes from Philo (*De Vita Contempl.*) a passage, concerning the Egyptian Therapeutæ, which gives remarkable evidence of this: “*Αζωστοὶ δὲ καὶ καθεμένοι τοὺς χιτωνίσκους εἰσίσιν ὑπηρετήσοντες, ἕνεκα τοῦ μηδὲν εἰδῶλον ἐπιφέρεισθαι δουλοπρεποῦς σχήματος εἰς τοῦτο τὸ συμπόσιον.*”

† Augustine: *Contra pestem vanæ gloriæ diligentissime militans.*

‡ Bengel: *Miser est quem Dominus servum inutilem appellat* (Matt. xxv. 30), *beatus qui se ipse.*

§ Cajetan: *Quod igitur dicitur, Quum feceritis omnia, non ideo dicitur, quod facturi essent omnia: sed quod si etiam faciunt omnia, sed quod quum merita habuerint facientium omnia præcepta, recognoscant se servos inutiles; ut a fortiori se recognoscant minus quam inutiles, hoc est debitores et reos multorum, quæ debebant seu debent facere.*—Our Church in her 14th Article has used this parable against the Romish doctrine of works of supererogation. Cf. GERHARD'S *Loc. Theoll.* loc. xviii. 8, 91.

## PARABLE XXVIII.

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### THE UNJUST JUDGE.

LUKE xviii. 1-8.

THIS parable is addressed to the disciples, and stands, as Theophylact and others have noted, in closest relation with what has gone immediately before, with the description of the sufferings and distress of the last times, when even the disciples “shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and shall not see it” (xviii. 22). Then will be, according to the deeply significant image in use among the Jews, and sanctioned by our Lord, the birth-pangs of the new creation,\* and the distresses of that time are the motive here set forth for prayer,—distresses which shall always be felt, but then at the last felt more intensely than ever. “*He spake a parable unto them, that men ought always to pray,*” that men must *needs* pray always, if they would escape the things coming on the earth—that such was the only condition of their escaping. It is not so much the duty or suitableness, as the absolute necessity, of instant persevering prayer that is here declared.† Nor is this all that the parable teaches, but

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\* Ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων, Matt. xxiv. 8: cf. John xvi. 21; Rom. viii. 22, πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συνωδίνει.

† Chrysostom has two remarkable sermons (*De Precatione*), which turn a good deal on this parable, and contain many remarkable things on the extreme needfulness of prayer; he calls it the medicine expelling spiritual sicknesses—the foundation of the spiritual building—that to the soul which the nerves are to the body. He likens the man without prayer to the fish out of water and gasping for life—to a city without walls, and exposed to all assaults;—but from him that is armed with prayer the tempter starts back, as midnight robbers start back when they see a sword suspended over a soldier's bed.—Some have questioned whether these sermons are Chrysostom's, and the Benedictine editors (vol. ii. p. 778) speak doubtfully, the main argu-

it gives us further some very deep insight into the nature and essence of prayer.

In this precept, to pray *always*\* (with which we may compare Ephes. vi. 18; 1 Thess. v. 17), there is nothing of exaggeration, nothing commanded which may not be fulfilled, when we understand of prayer as the continual desire of the soul after God; having indeed its seasons of an intenser concentration of the spiritual life, but not being confined to those times; since the whole life of the faithful should be, in Origen's beautiful words, one great connected prayer,†—or, as St. Basil expresses it, prayer being the salt which should salt every thing besides. "That soul," says Donne, "that is accustomed to direct herself to God upon every occasion, that as a flower at sunrising, conceives a sense of God in every beam of his, and spreads and dilates itself towards Him, in a thankfulness, in every small blessing that He sheds upon her, . . . that soul who, whatsoever string be stricken in her, bass or treble, her high or her low estate, is ever turned towards God, that soul prays sometimes when it does not know that it prays."‡ Admirable are Augustine's sayings on this matter, drawn as they are from the depths of his own Christian life. Thus in one place: "It was not for nothing that the Apostle said, 'Pray without ceasing.' Can we indeed without ceasing bend the knee, bow the body, or lift up the hands, that he should say, 'Pray without ceasing'? There is another interior prayer

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ment against them being, that Sennacherib is twice spoken of in them as king of the *Persians*;—an error, they think, which Chrysostom could scarcely have committed. But it should not be called an error; the names of the three great Eastern monarchies were of old continually confounded, and this, where it is impossible that ignorance could have been the cause. Thus Darius is called (Ezra vi. 22) king of *Assyria*,—and Artaxerxes (Neh. xiii. 6) king of *Babylon*; the explanation being that the three first empires, as we call them, were considered not as different, but as one and the same empire continued under different dynasties. D'Herbelot (*Bibl. Orient.* s. v. Nough) mentions something of the sort as being the view of the modern East: Il faut remarquer ici, que les Orientaux comprennent dans les dynasties des anciens rois de Perse, les Assyriens, les Babyloniens, et les Medes.

\* Tirinus on this "*always*:" Non obstante tædio, metu, tentatione.

† *Μία μεγάλη συνεχομένη προσευχή.*

‡ *Sermon xi., On the Purification.*

without intermission, and that is the longing of thy heart. Whatever else thou mayest be doing, if thou longest after that Sabbath of God, thou dost not intermit to pray. If thou wishest not to intermit to pray, see that thou do not intermit to desire—thy continual desire is thy continual voice. Thou wilt be silent, if thou leave off to love, for they were silent of whom it is written, ‘Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.’ The coldness of love is the silence of the heart; the fervency of love is the cry of the heart.”\* But He who knew how easily we are put off from prayer, and under what continual temptations to grow slack in it, especially if we find not at once the answer we expect, warns us against this very thing, bidding us to pray always, and “*not to faint*,”† since in due season we shall reap if we faint not; and in proof of this He adduces this unrighteous judge, with whom the feeble importunities of the helpless widow did yet so mightily prevail as at length to extort from him the boon which at first he was determined to deny.

None but the Son of God himself might have ventured to use this comparison. It had been overbold on the lips of any other. For as in the parable of the Friend at Midnight we were startled with finding God compared to a *churlish* neighbour, so here with finding Him likened to an *unrighteous* judge. Yet we must not seek therefore to extenuate,—as some have been at great pains to do, and by many forced constructions,—his unrighteousness:‡ but on the contrary, the

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\* *Enarr. in Ps. xxxvii. 10*: Ipsum desiderium tuum, oratio tua est, et si continuum desiderium, continua oratio. . . Frigus caritatis, silentium cordis est: flagrantia caritatis, clamor cordis est; and elsewhere: Tota vita Christiani boni sanctum desiderium est; and again: Lingua tua ad horam laudat, vita tua semper laudet. Cf. *Ep. cxxx. 8*.

† Ἐκκαεῖν—a word of not unfrequent use with St. Paul, but elsewhere in the N. T. only here. Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. lxxv. 20*) warns against the danger of this “*fainting*.” Multi languescunt in oratione, et in novitate suæ conversionis ferventer orant, postea languide, postea frigide, postea negligenter: quasi securi fiunt. Vigilat hostis; dormis tu. . . Ergo non deficiamus in oratione: ille quod concessurus est, etsi differt, non aufert.

‡ For a monstrous specimen of the explanations, of which the aim is to get rid of the ἀδίκια of the judge, see Theophylact (in loc.): it is

greater we conceive that to have been, the more encouragement does the parable contain, the stronger the argument for persevering prayer becomes. If a bad man will yield to the mere force of the importunity which he hates, how much more certainly will a righteous God be prevailed on by the faithful prayer which He loves.\* The fact that the judge is an unrighteous one is not an accident cleaving to the earthly form under which the heavenly truth is set forth, and which would have been got rid of, if it conveniently could, but is rather a circumstance deliberately chosen for the mightier setting forth of that truth.—In two strokes is described the wickedness of the earthly judge; he “*feared not God, neither regarded man.*” “*He feared not God.*” ‘All that God’s law had said concerning the judge’s charge, and the unrighteous judge’s guilt, he counted light of (Exod. xxiii. 6-9; Lev. xix. 15; Deut. i. 16, 17; 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7). Not merely was there wanting in him that higher motive, the fear of God, but its poor and miserable substitute, respect for the opinion of the world, was equally inoperative with him; some rise above, he had sunk below, even this. And worse than all, he dared to avow this contempt to himself. The case, therefore, of any suppliant was the more hopeless, especially of one weak and poor,—weak, so that she could not compel him to do her justice,—and poor, so that she could not supply him with any motive, why for her sake he should brave, it might be, the resentment of formidable adversaries. Such no doubt is the widow of the parable, one “that is a widow indeed and desolate.” Many writers have noticed the exceeding desolation of the state of widowhood in the East, and the obvious-

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not, however, approved by him. It is also adduced by Pseudo-Athanasius (*De Parab. Script.* qu. 30), and mentioned in SUICER, *Theol.* s. v. κριτής. It stands parallel with the extraordinary explanation of Nathan’s parable of the Ewe Lamb (2 Sam. xii. 1) given by Ambrose (*Apolog. Proph. David.* 5).

\* Augustine (*Serm.* cxv. 1): Si ergo exaudivit qui oderat quod rogabatur, quomodo exaudit qui ut rogemus, hortatur? and Tertulian, on the holy violence of prayer: Hæc vis Deo est grata. Clemens too (Potter’s ed. p. 947): Χαίρει ὁ Θεὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα ἡτρώμενος.



ness of the widow, as one having none to help her, to all manner of oppressions and wrongs;\* of this, the numerous warnings against such oppression which Scripture contains, are evidence sufficient (Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. xxiv. 17; xxvii. 19; Mal. iii. 5).

How fitly then does this widow represent the Church under persecution,†—not necessarily under any particular persecution, but under that which is always going forward, the oppression from the adverse element in which she draws her breath. Nor need it be only the Church at large which we see represented in her, but also any single soul in conflict with the powers of darkness and the world. The “*adversary*” will then be the prince of the darkness of this world, the head of all the powers which are arrayed against the manifestation of the kingdom of God either in a single soul, or in the whole world; keeping down and, as far as it is allowed him, oppressing it; the spiritual Herod that is ever seeking to destroy the heavenly child. But the elect, they who, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within themselves, waiting their perfect redemption, are here represented as in conflict with those adverse powers, as suffering oppression from them; till under the sense of that oppression, and of their helplessness to effect their own deliverance, a cry is wrung out from them, a cry for aid, and chiefly for that aid which will be final and complete, the revelation of the Son of man in his glory,—even the cry of the prophet, “Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down” (Isai. liv. 1), when the wicked shall fall and not rise again, when the Church shall be at rest, being for

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\* For instance, Ward in his *Illustrations of Scripture from the Manners and Customs of the Hindoos*. Thus too Terence:

Non, ita me Dii ament, auderet facere hæc viduæ mulieri,  
Quæ in me fecit

† Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps. cxxxi. 15*): Omnis anima quæ intelligit se desertam omni auxilio nisi solius Dei, vidua est; . . . omnis Ecclesia una vidua est, deserta in hoc seculo; si sentit illud, si novit viduitatem suam: tunc enim auxilium præsto est illi; and *Quæst. Evang. ii. qu. 45*: Ipsa vero vidua potest habere similitudinem Ecclesiæ, quæ desolata videtur donec veniat Dominus, qui tamen in secreto etiam nunc curam ejus gerit. Cf. Isai. liv. 1-8.

ever set free from all the enemies that are round about her. It would be a very imperfect and slight view of those cries for deliverance of which Psalms and prophets are so full, to refer them to any particular and transient outward afflictions or persecutions which the Church or any of its members are enduring. The world is *always*, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether by flattery or by hostile violence, oppressing the Church; and Satan evermore seeking to hinder the manifestation of the life of God in every one of its members: and prayer is the cry *de profundis* which the elect utter, the calling in of a mightier to aid, when they feel the danger to be urgent lest the enemy should prevail against them. And the words in which the widow's need finds utterance, "*Avenge me of mine adversary*," wonderfully express the relation in which we stand to the evil of which we are conscious as mightily working within us;—that it is not our very self, but an alien power, holding us in bondage,—not the very "I," as St. Paul (Rom. vii.) is so careful to assert, for then redemption would be impossible, but sin which, having introduced itself, is now seeking to keep us in bondage. It is one great work of the Spirit of God to make us feel this distinctness between us and the evil which is in us. The new creation is in this like the old, that it is a separating of the light from the darkness in the soul of man,—not indeed, as yet, an entire expelling of that darkness, but a disengaging of the light from it, so that the light being brought into direct relation with Him who is the fountain of all light, may act as an opposing power to that darkness. The good and the evil in him are no longer in a state of blind contradiction, but of distinct self-conscious opposition. The renewed man knows that he has an adversary, but he knows also that this adversary is not his very self, but another; so that if he resist, the other will flee from him; he knows that the power exercised over him is an usurpation, and that it will be a righteous thing for God to cast out him who obtained that power by fraud and by violence; and knowing this, he is able to cry, with the widow in the parable, "*Avenge me of mine adversary*," or rather, since men go not

to a judge for vengeance, but for justice,—“Do me right on, or deliver me from the oppression of, mine adversary.”\* And this is the same petition that we make daily, when we say, “Deliver us from evil,” or rather, “from the Evil One,”—from him who is the source and centre of all evil.†

For a time the judge was deaf to the widow's petition; “*He would not for a while.*” When it was said above that the strength of the parable lay in the *unlikeness* between the righteous Judge of the world, and this ungodly earthly judge, it was not meant to be denied, nay, this too is part of the teaching here, that God often *seems to man* to be acting as this unjust judge, to be turning a deaf ear to the prayer of his people. For even the elect are impatient in affliction; they expect a speedier deliverance than God is always willing to vouchsafe them; they think they have a claim to be heard and delivered more promptly than God thinks good.‡ They cry, and when they receive no speedy answer, but are left, as it appears to them, long in the hands of their enemies, in the furnace of affliction, they are tempted to hard thoughts of God, as though He took part with, or at least was contented to endure, the proud oppressors, while the cry of his afflicted people was as nothing in his ears; they are tempted to say with the storm-tost disciples, “Carest thou not that we perish?” Now the parable is in fact intended, as we shall presently see, to meet this very temptation, to which the faithful, suffering long under sore earthly trials, are exposed. We have in ver. 4, 5, recorded, not of course what the judge spoke aloud, scarcely what he spoke in his own hearing, but the voice of his heart, as that heart spake in the hearing of God:§ “*He said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor*

\* Schleusner, s. v. ἐκδικέω: Assere me jure dicundo ab injuriâ adversarii mei.

† The analogy of other passages, Matt. xiii. 19, 39; Ephes. vi. 16; 2 Thess. iii. 3, would lead us to translate in the Lord's prayer *πονηροῦ* not as a neuter, but masculine; and all the quotations in SUICER's *Thes.* s. v. show that it was so interpreted in the Greek Church.

‡ AUGUSTINE, *Enarr. 2<sup>a</sup> in Ps. xxxiv.* 17.

§ Bernard: Audit Deus in corde cogitantis, quod nec ipse audit qui cogitat.

*regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary\* me.*" He was not stirred to do her right by any other motive than a selfish regard for his own ease; but lest this should be continually disturbed, he "*will avenge her,*" that so he may be quit of her importunities, and not plagued or vexed by her any more. Something of the same motive, and not that they were more pitiful than their Lord, moved the disciples to ask for the woman of Canaan, that her prayer might be granted: "Send her away; for she crieth after us"† (Matt. xv. 23). Indeed

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\* He uses a strong expression here, *ὑποπιάζω*, from *ὑπόπιον*, the part of the face under the eyes. Wahl: *ὑποπιάζω*, sugillo, ut sub oculis vibices et maculæ luridæ existant. St. Paul uses the same word (1 Cor ix 27) to describe the discipline to which he submitted his body. Both there and here there is another reading, *ὑποπιάζω* or *ὑποπιέζω*, which has some authorities in its favour. But the birth of that reading, here at least, is easy to trace; the transcribers thinking this too strong an expression for anything which the widow could effect: for how could she punish him till his face became black and blue? But the use of so strong a term is very characteristic of the man described. Bengel: Hyperbole judicis injusti et impatientis personæ conveniens. It is exactly this exaggeration of language, which selfishness uses in the things which threaten its own ease and enjoyment, and we have numerous examples of a like usage of words: thus *σκόλλειν*, to annoy, means properly to flay; and the Spanish *ahorcar*, used much in the same sense, means rightly, to put to death by hanging; our English, to plague, is properly, to lash; to pester is impestare, and these examples might easily be multiplied. Beza's translation, obtundat, is happy,—that word being used exactly in this sense: thus Terence, *Ne me obtundas hæc de te sapius*. Chrysostom's assertion (*De Laz. Conc.* iii. 5), that it was pity which at length moved the judge, is totally opposed to the whole spirit of the parable.

† The endeavour to obtain redress by long-continued crying, and by mere force of importunity,—to extort by these means a boon or a right which is expected from no other motives, is quite in the spirit of the East. Thus it is mentioned in CHARDIN'S *Travels in Persia*, that the peasants of a district, when their crops have failed, and they therefore desire a remission of the contributions imposed on their villages, or when they would appeal against some tyrannical governor, will assemble before the gates of the Schah's harem, and there continue howling and throwing dust in the air (Job ii. 12; Acts xxii. 28), and not be silenced or driven away, till he has sent out and demanded the cause, and thus given them at least an opportunity of stating their griefs; or sometimes they would beset him in the same manner as he passed through the streets of the city, and thus seek

this parable and that miracle form altogether an interesting parallel (cf. Ecclus. xxxv. 17).

Between the parable and its application it is likely that the Lord paused for a while, and then again resumed: "*Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?*" In the first clause of the sentence the emphasis should be laid on the word "*unjust*;" in the other, the epithet of goodness or righteousness, which should complete the antithesis, is omitted, as being necessarily included in the name, God. If the "*unjust*" judge acts thus, shall not the *just* God avenge his own elect? And the antithesis is to be carried through all the members of the sentence: the righteous God is not only opposed to the unrighteous judge, but the elect, the precious before God, to the widow, the despised among men; their prayers to her clamour; and the days and nights during which those prayers are made, to the comparatively short time during which she with her importunities beset the judge. The certainty that the elect will be heard rests not, however, on their mighty and assiduous\* crying as its ultimate ground, but on their election of God; which is, therefore, here brought prominently forward,† they being called by this name of God's elect, rather than by any other of the many titles that might at first sight have seemed equally appropriate:—just as in Daniel (xii. 1) the deliverance of God's people is traced up to the same cause: "At that time," that is, at the time of extremest distress, "thy people shall be delivered, *every one that shall be found written in the book.*" And this their deliverance, shall it not arrive, asks the Lord, "*though he bear long with them?*" When God is

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to gain, and often succeed in gaining, their point, not from his love of justice, but from his desire to be freed from annoyance (BURDER'S *Orient. Illust.* vol. ii. p. 382).

\* Ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός here = πάντοτε of ver. 1. Our English "*cry*" too weakly renders the original βοᾶν. Tertullian translates it better by mugire; a *mighty* crying (Gen. iv. 10; Jon. iii. 8, LXX.; Jam. v. 4) is here attributed to the elect.

† Bengel (*in Matt.* xxiv. 22): Ubi supra robur fidelium ordinarium excedit vis tentationum, electio allegatur.

said to "bear long" with men, the phrase is most often used to set forth his patience in giving to them time and space for repentance; it would therefore avoid perplexity, if here another phrase were used, as for instance, "*though He bear them long in hand?*" or, "*though He delay with them long?*"\*—long, that is, as men count length. He may be slack in avenging his people, as "men count slackness," as compared with their impatience, with their desire to be at once delivered from affliction; but, indeed, "*he will avenge them speedily,*" not

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\* The words *καὶ μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς* have created much difficulty. Some refer *αὐτοῖς* to the oppressors on whom the vengeance is taken, and *μακροθυμῶν* is then used in its commonest sense; "*Shall not God avenge his elect, though he bear long with their oppressors?*" yet against this Wolf says truly, *Impiorum, de quibus ultio sit sumenda, non meminit Christus*. But *μακροθυμέω* need not be necessarily differo *ultionem*, but merely differo, patienter expecto; see Heb. vi. 15; Jam. v. 7, 8, Job vii. 16, and especially Eccus. xxxv. 18 (in the Greek xxxii. 18). Grotius seizes happily the point from which the two meanings diverge, he says: *Est in hac voce dilationis significatio, quæ ut debitori prodest, ita gravis est ei qui vim patitur*. Suicer, who has given rightly the meaning of the Lord's words (*quamvis lente ad vindicandum ipsos procedat*), has (s. v. *μακροθυμέω*) a good and useful commentary on all the latter part of the parable. The proverb may be brought into comparison: *Habet Deus suas horas, et moras*.—Since the above was written, I have seen an essay by Hassler (*Tubing Zeitschr.* 1832, Heft iii. pp. 117-125), wherein he finds fault with this explanation, which he denies to lie in the words, and makes *καὶ μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς* a description of God's patience with his suppliants, as contrasted with the fretful irritation of the judge under the solicitations of her that beset him: and the passage, in his view, might thus be translated, "*Shall not God avenge his own elect, when also He is patient toward them?*" shall He not avenge them, and so much the more, while their reiterated prayers do not vex or weary Him, as that widow's prayers vexed and wearied the judge, arousing no impatience, but only supreme compassion in his heart? Our Lord is then giving an additional motive why they should not faint in prayer. There may be a question, whether it is not the intention of the Vulgate to give this meaning, when it translates, *Et patientiam habebit in illis?* and of Luther: *Und sollte Geduld darüber haben?* but darüber is ambiguous. At all events this interpretation has no claim to be a new light thrown upon the passage, as the writer supposes. Homberg (*Parerga*, p. 146) had long ago proposed it; and Wolf (*Curæ*, in loc.) is inclined to fall in with it, who sums up the meaning thus: *Patientia igitur Dei hic refertur ad auditionem precum electorum, quod oppositum judicis injusti exemplum probabile reddit, qui non patienter audiebat viduæ querelas*.

leaving them a moment longer in the fire of affliction than is needful, delivering them from it the instant that patience has had its perfect work; so that there is, and there is meant to be, an apparent contradiction, while yet there is no real one, between ver. 7 and that which follows. The relief which to man's impatience seems to tarry long, indeed arrives speedily; it could not, according to the far-seeing and loving counsels of God, have arrived a moment earlier.\* We may find a practical illustration of these words in the whole of our Lord's conduct with the family of Bethany (John xi.), in the depths into which He suffered them to be brought, before He brought them aid; just as, to take a somewhat less illustrious example, it was not till the *fourth* watch, in other words, until the last, that He came to aid his disciples labouring in vain against an adverse and perilous sea (Matt. xiv. 24, 25).

The words with which the application of the parable concludes, "*Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*" are perplexing, for they appear at first sight to call in question the success of his whole mediatorial work.† But though we have other grounds for believing that the Church will, at that last moment, be reduced to a very little band, yet here the point is not, that there will be then few faithful or none, but that the faith even of the faithful will be almost failing. The distress will be so urgent, the darkness so thick, at the moment when the Son of man shall at length come forth for salvation and deliverance, that even the hearts of his elect people will have begun to fail them for fear. The

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\* Unger (*De Par. Jes. Nat.* p. 136): Opponuntur sibi μακροθυμῶν atque ἐν τάχει, illud fortasse ad hominum opinionem (ut sit, "si vel tardior videatur"), hoc ad sapiens Dei consilium referendum. Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps.* xci. 6) has some admirable remarks on the impatience of men, contrasted with the seeming tardiness of God.

† We learn from Augustine that they were used by the Donatists, in reply to the Church, when the latter pleaded against them her numbers and her universality (omnes enim hæretici in paucis et in parte sunt: *Enarr. in Ps.* xxxi. 2). The Donatists answered (applying to their own day this prophecy concerning the last times), that the Lord Himself had declared this fewness of the faithful; how He should hardly find faith on the earth.

lateness of the help Zechariah (xiv. 1-5) describes under images of the old theocracy,—Jerusalem shall be already taken, and the enemy within its walls, spoiling and desolating, when the Lord shall come forth, his feet standing on the Mount of Olives, to fight against its enemies. All help will seem utterly to have failed, so that the Son of man at his coming will hardly find faith, or rather *that* faith, the faith which does not faint in prayer, with allusion to ver. 1,—the faith which hopes against hope, and believes that light will break forth even when the darkness is thickest, and believing this, continues to pray,\*—He will hardly find that faith upon earth. The words throw light on, and receive light from, those other words of our Lord's; "For the elect's sake," lest their faith also should fail, and so no flesh should be saved, "those days shall be shortened"† (Matt. xxiv. 22).

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\* Theophylact: Πάσης προσευχῆς βάθρον καὶ κρηπίς ἡ πίστις. And Augustine. Si fides deficit, oratio perit: quis enim orat quod non credit?

† Vitringa's explanation of the parable (*Erklar. d. Parab.* p. 960, seq.) is curious. I should think it is his own, and likely to remain so. The unjust judge represents the Roman emperors, the importunate widow the early Church, which sought evermore to plead its cause before them, and by their interference to be delivered from its oppressors. The emperors, after a long while, undertook its defence, ceasing themselves to persecute, and not suffering others any more to persecute it—Yet stranger than this is the view of Irenæus (*Con. Hær.* v. 25), and of Hippolytus, or whoever else is the author of the treatise *De Antichristo*, 37. The widow is the earthly Jerusalem, Israel after the flesh, which, forgetful of God, turns to the unjust judge, that is, to Antichrist, for *he* is the despiser alike of God and men (ver. 2), for aid against Him whom she falsely believes her adversary, namely, Christ. They see an allusion to the last days and to the mighty part which, as they assume, the unbelieving Jews would have in the setting up of Antichrist's kingdom (John v. 43; Dan. viii. 12).



## PARABLE XXIX.

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### THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

LUKE xviii. 9-14

THE last parable was to teach us that prayer must be earnest and persevering; this that it must also be humble.\* Some have supposed, as, for example, Vitringa,† that here too we have set forth before us the rejection of the Jew and the acceptance of the Gentile; the Pharisee being the representative of that whole nation which would have accepted him as its most favourable specimen—the publican, of the Gentiles, with whom those despised collectors of customs were commonly classed; the one glorying in his merits, proudly extolling himself above the “sinners of the Gentiles,” but through this very pride and self-righteousness failing to become partaker of the righteousness of God; while the other, meekly acknowledging his vileness, and repenting his sins, is justified freely by his grace. But the words with which the parable is introduced (ver. 9), and which must give the law to its interpreta-

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\* Augustine finds a yet closer connexion: Quia fides non est superborum sed humilium, præmissis subjecit parabolam de humilitate contra superbiam.

† *Erklar. d. Parab.* p. 974. Augustine too (*Enarr. in Ps. lxxiv. 8*) thinks this application may be made, though it is not with him the primary: Hoc latius accipientes, intelligamus duos populos, Judæorum et Gentium: Judæorum populus Phariseus ille, Gentium populus Publicanus ille. Judæorum populus jactabat merita sua, Gentium confitebatur peccata sua. So H. de Sto. Victore (*Annot. in Luc.*): Phariseus Judaicum populum significat, qui ex justificationis legibus extollit merita sua, et superbiendo recedit. Humiliatus publicanus Gentilem significat, qui longe a Deo positus, peccata confitetur, et lamentando propinquat Deo, et exaltatur. Schleiermacher also observes, that it contradicts the idea of a parable, that the Pharisee should here mean a Pharisee, or the Pharisees generally; but this objection yields to the fact, that the term parable is of very wide signification throughout the New Testament.

tion, are opposed to this scheme. It was spoken "*unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*;" the aim of it was to cure a fault which the Lord had noted in some of those that surrounded Him. He had seen in some of his disciples displays of spiritual pride, of self-exaltation, accompanied, as they always will be, with the contempt of others. There is no hint given in the context to lead us to suppose that the relations of Jew and Gentile are now before Him. He is dealing rather with a spiritual mischief, symptoms of which He has detected in some of his own followers; I say, *in some of his own followers*, because it is altogether inconceivable that by the example of a Pharisee He is warning and rebuking the Pharisees. It would have been to small profit to have held up to these last the spectacle of a Pharisee praying as this one prays in the parable. *They* would have held it only most natural and proper, that he should have prayed exactly in this fashion. There would have been *for them* no conviction of sin in this, but only for a disciple, for one who had advanced much further in spiritual insight, however he was in danger of falling back into pharisaic sins. Such a one would only need his sin to be plainly shown to him, and he would start back at its deformity. He would see the latent Pharisee in himself, and tremble and repent.\*

"*Two men went up into the temple to pray*," we are to suppose at one of the fixed hours of devotion (Acts iii. 1), "*the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican*;" a Brahmin and a Pariah, as one might say, if preaching from this Gospel

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\* Mr. Greswell truly asks (*Exp. of the Par.* vol. iv. p. 247, seq.): "Of what use in a moral point of view would it be to hold up to the Pharisee the true picture of himself and his sect? or what hope could there be of correcting his characteristic vices, whatever they were, by laying them bare, and exposing them openly and nakedly before himself? Such an exposure might be well calculated to irritate and offend, but not to reform or amend them; for it cannot be supposed that they would willingly be parties in their own disgrace, or patiently acquiesce in their own condemnation." See also p. 248, note, some important remarks on the question how far this is a parable proper or not.

in India—the Pharisee, a specimen of that class of men, who, satisfying themselves with a certain external freedom from gross offences, have remained ignorant of the plague of their own hearts, and have never learned to say, “Deliver me from mine adversary,” who do not even know that they have an “adversary;” the publican, a representative of all those who, though they have much and grievously transgressed, are now feeling the burden of their sins, and heartily mourning them, who also are yearning after One who shall deliver them from those sins, and from the curse of God’s broken law. The parable would make us feel how much nearer is such a one to the kingdom of God than the self-complacent Pharisee, or than any who share in the spirit and temper of the Pharisee, that he indeed may be within that kingdom, while the other is certainly without.\*

It is a mistake growing out of forgetfulness of Jewish and early Christian customs, when some commentators see in the fact that the Pharisee prayed *standing*, an evidence already manifesting itself of his pride.† Even the parable itself contradicts this notion, for the publican, whose prayer was an humble one, stood also. But to pray standing was the manner of the Jews (1 Kin. viii. 22; 2 Chron. vi. 12; Matt. vi. 5; Mark xi. 25); though in moments of a more than ordinary humiliation or emotion of heart, they changed this attitude for one of kneeling or prostration (Dan. vi. 10; 2 Chron. vi. 13; Acts ix. 40; xx. 36; xxi. 5). The term *station* (statio)

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\* Gregory the Great (*Moral.* xix. 21) wittily likens this Pharisee, and all who, because of their victory over certain temptations, are exalted with pride, and so perish through their very successes, to Eleazar, who killed the elephant, but was himself crushed by its falling body (1 Macc. vi. 46): In prælio elephantem feriens stravit, sed sub ipso quem extinxit, occubuit.

† Tirinus: Phariseus stans superbo et erecto animo, quasi Deum ad iudicium provocans: so also Theophylact. It is possible, however, the *σταθεῖς* may be emphatic,—He stood forward prominently so that all men might see him as he was engaged in his devotions (see Matt. vi. 5), which would then contrast with the *μακρόθεν ἑστώς*, and the whole attitude of the publican; on which see Cyprian, *De Orat. Dom.* ad init.; and Ambrose, *De Off. Minist.* i. 18, 70.

passed into the usage of the Christian Church; it was so called, as Ambrose explains it, because *standing* the Christian soldier repelled the attacks of his spiritual enemy; and on the Lord's day the faithful stood in prayer, to commemorate their Saviour's resurrection on that day; through which they, who by sin had fallen, were again lifted up and set upon their feet.\* Some have combined the words somewhat differently, and rendered the passage thus, "*The Pharisee stood by himself,† and prayed.*" There would certainly be something morally striking in this construction, indicating as it would that the Pharisee,—*separatist* in spirit as in name,‡ and now also in outward act,—desired to put a distance between himself and all unclean worshippers (see Isai. lxx. 5); but the other construction, it is generally agreed, should be adhered to.

His prayer at first seems to promise well; "*God, I thank thee,*" yet its early promise quickly disappears; for under the pretence of thankfulness to God, he does but thinly veil his exaltation of self; and he cannot thank God for the good which, as he fancies, he finds in himself, without insulting and casting scorn upon others for the evil which he sees, or fancies that he sees, in them. He thanks God, but not aright;§ for the Pharisees, as Grotius well observes, "did not exclude the divine help. But they who allow it and use this language, are frequently ungrateful to it, allotting, as they do, to themselves the first share in virtuous actions, to God the second; or so recognizing common benefits, as to avoid fleeing as suppliants to that peculiar mercy which their own sins require."||

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\* See BINGHAM's *Christ Antt.* xiii. 8, 3.

† So Cameron and J. Cappellus in the *Crit. Sac.*, who make *πρὸς ἑαυτόν* = *καθ' ἑαυτόν*.

‡ Hesychius. *Φαρισαῖος ἀφωρισμένος, μεμερισμένος, καθυρός*. St. Bernard observes how he isolates himself in his prayer: *Gratias agit non quia bonus, sed quia solus; non tam de bonis quæ habet, quam de malis quæ in aliis videt.*

§ Augustine says here (*Serm. cxv. 3*), with an eye to the Pelagians, the ingrati gratiæ: *Quid est ergo qui impie oppugnat gratiam, si reprehenditur qui superbe agit gratias?*

|| There is an interesting anecdote told of the writer of these words, which connects itself with this parable. At Rostock, where he

Thus it was with this man; while the right recognition of God's grace will always be accompanied with deep self-abasement, confessing, as we must, how little true we have been to that grace,—how infinitely short we are of what we ought to, and might, have been, having had such help at command; not to say that, we shall thank Him as truly for our needs, for the sense of need which He has awakened within us, as for the supplies of grace which He has given us. But this Pharisee thanks God that he is "*not as other men*," dividing the whole of mankind into two classes, putting himself in a class alone, and thrusting down all beside himself into the other class; his arrogance reaches even to such a pitch as this; he in one class, all the world besides in the other. And as he can think nothing too good of himself, so nothing too bad of them; they do not merely come a little short of his excellences, but they are "*extortioners, unjust, adulterers*." And then, his eye alighting on the publican,\* of whom he may have known nothing, but that he *was* a publican, he drags him into his prayer, making him to supply the dark background on which the bright colours of his own virtues shall more gloriously appear,—finding, it may be, in the deep heart-earnestness with which the poor man was beating his breast, in the fixedness of his downcast eyes, proofs in confirmation of the judgment which he passes upon him. *He*, thank God, has no need to beat his breast in that fashion, nor to cast his eyes in that shame upon the ground; he has done nothing to call for this.

So perfect is he in regard to the commands of the second

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was overtaken by a mortal illness on his way to Sweden, he was attended on his death-bed by a Lutheran clergyman, named Quistorp. When this last reminded him, with the fidelity due to a dying man, on the one side, of all his sins known and unknown, and on the other, not of his merits and reputation which filled the world, but only of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, as of the one way of salvation, and of the publican who had known how to lay hold of that way, Grotius replied, "I am that publican," and so expired. Quistorp has himself given the account in a letter to Calov, the old antagonist of Grotius.

\* Augustine, *Enarr.* 1<sup>a</sup> in *Ps.* lxx. 2. Hoc jam non est exsultare, sed insultare.

table. He now returns to the first; in that also he is without blame. "*I fast twice in the week.*" He is evidently boasting his works of supererogation. According to the law of Moses, but one fast-day in the year was appointed, the great day of atonement\* (Lev. xvi. 29; Num. xxix. 7); but the more religious Jews, both those who were so and those who would seem so, and especially the Pharisees, kept two fasts weekly,† on the second and fifth days in the week. Nor is this all: "*I give tithes of all that I possess;*" or rather, "*of all which I acquire.*"‡ He, another Jacob, has made the same promise to God which the patriarch made of old: "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. xxviii. 22; cf. xiv. 20). The law commanded only to tithe the fruit of the field and produce of the cattle (Num. xviii. 21; Deut. xiv. 22; Lev. xxvii. 30); but he no doubt tithed mint and cummin (Matt. xxiii. 23), *all* that came into his possession, down to the trifles about which there was question, even in the Jewish schools, whether it was needful to tithe them or not (Hos. xii. 8). He would therefore in both respects lay claim to doing more than might strictly be demanded of him; he would bring in God as his debtor; turning those very precepts concerning fasting and paying of tithes, which were given to men, the first to waken in them the sense of inward poverty and need, the second to bring them to feel that whatever they had, they were debtors for it to God, and stewards of his,—turning even these into occasions for self-exaltation, and using them to minister to his

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\* Called therefore ἡ νηστεία, Acts xxvii. 9. and by Philo, νηστείας ἐορτή.

† The Latin Fathers are led astray by the τοῦ σαββάτου here (in the Vulgate sabbato), and understand the Pharisee to say that he fasted twice *upon the Sabbath*,—though it is difficult to guess what they could have understood by the twice fasting upon one day (see AUGUSTINE's *Ep.* xxxvi. 4). But the week was entitled τὰ σαββάρα, or sometimes as here τὸ σαββαρον, deriving its title from its chiefest day, as on the other hand the Sabbath was called ἑβδομάς.

‡ "Ὅσα κτῶμαι=quæ mihi redeunt. It is only the perfect κέκτημαι which means "*I possess,*" *i. e.* I have acquired. All the English translations, with the Vulgate (quæ possideo), share in a common error.

arrogance and his pride. Acknowledgment of wants, or confession of sin, there is none in his prayer, if prayer it can be called, which knows nothing of these.\* “Had he then,” asks Augustine, “no sins to confess? Yes, he too had sins; but, perverse and knowing not whither he had come, he was like a patient on the table of a surgeon, who should show his sound limbs, and cover his hurts. But let God cover thy hurts, and not thou: for if, ashamed, *thou* seekest to cover them, the physician will not cure them. Let him cover and cure them; for under the covering of the physician the wound is healed, under the covering of the sufferer it is only concealed; and concealed from whom? from Him to whom all things are known.”†

It aggravates our sense of the moral outrage which is involved in the Pharisee’s contemptuous allusion to his fellow-worshipper, if we keep in mind that in this last we are to see one who at this very moment was passing into the kingdom of God, who had come in the fulness of a contrite heart, to make, as seems evidently meant, the first deep confession of his sins past which had ever found utterance from his lips, in whom under sore pangs the new man was being born. How horrible a thing does the Pharisee’s untimely scorn appear, when we think of it, mingling as a harshest discord with the songs, the *Te Deums*, of angels, which at this very moment hailed the lost who was found, the sinner who repented. For “*the publican standing afar off*,” though, as Augustine observes, not afar off from God, for the Lord is *nigh* unto them

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\* Augustine (*Serm.* ccxc. 6): Rogare veneras, an te laudare? totum te habere dixisti; nihil tanquam egens petisti. Quomodo ergo orare venisti? And *Serm.* cxv. 6: Parum est, non Deum rogare, sed se laudare; insuper et roganti insultare.

† Augustine (*Enarr.* 2<sup>a</sup> in *Ps.* xxxi. 2), who has in the same place much more that is excellent on this parable. See also *Serm.* cccli. 1: Non enim ille Phariseus tam suâ sanitate, quam morborum alienorum comparatione gaudebat. Utilius autem illi erat, quoniam ad medicum venerat, ea de quibus ægrotabat confitendo monstrare, quam dissimulare a vulneribus suis, et de cicatricibus alienis audere gloriari. Non ergo mirum, si publicanus magis curatus abscessit, quem non puduit ostendere quod dolebat. Cf. CHRYSOSTOM, *De Pœnit. Hom.* ii. 4.

that are of a contrite heart, "*would not lift up so much as his eyes\* unto heaven,*" to the dwelling of the Holy One, for he felt as the prodigal, that he had "sinned against heaven" (Luke xv. 18), as Ezra when he exclaimed, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra ix. 6). He stood "*afar off,*" not that he was a proselyte or a heathen, or had not full right to approach, for undoubtedly he also was a Jew, but in reverent awe, not venturing to press nearer to the holy place; for he perceived something of the holiness of God, and (which always exactly keeps pace with that knowledge) of his own sinfulness and defilement (Isai. vi. 3, 5); he felt that his sins had set him at a distance from God, and until he had received the atonement, the propitiation which he asks for, he could not presume to draw nigher. Moreover, he "*smote upon his breast,*" an outward sign of inward grief, or self-accusation† (Nah. ii. 7; Luke xxiii. 48), as one judging himself, that he might not be judged of the Lord, and who would acknowledge how much heavier strokes might justly come upon him; at the same time, he said, "*God be merciful‡ to me a sinner,*"§

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\* "*Not so much as his eyes*"—far less than his hands and his countenance, which yet would be usually lifted up in prayer (1 Tim. ii. 8; 1 Kin. viii. 54; Heb. xii. 12; Ps. xxviii. 2); which no doubt the Pharisee had lifted up in his. The feeling that in the eyes cast down to the ground is the natural expression of shame and humiliation, is permanently embodied in the word *καθηφεία*, from *κατά* and *φάος*. Cf. Tacitus (*Hist.* iv. 72): *Stabant conscientia flagitii mœstæ fixis in terram oculis.*

† Augustine (*Serm.* lxvii. 1): *Tundere pectus, quid est, nisi arguere quod latet in pectore, et evidenti pulsu occultum castigare peccatum; for, as elsewhere he says: Quid est homo pœnitens, nisi homo sibi irascens?* Bengel: *Ubi dolor, ibi manus.*

‡ *Ἰλάσθητι*. The selection of this word is very observable: see Passow, who, without any reference to Scripture, shows how *ἰλάσκειν* implies not reconciliation only, but reconciliation effected through some gift or sacrifice or offering:—so that Köcher (*Analecta*, in loc.) has right when he says: *Eam vocis ἰλάσθητι vim esse, ut causam meritorum propitiationis, nempe cruentam Christi passionem et mortem, simul comprehendat et indicet.*

§ Augustine (*In Evang. Joh. Tract.* 12): *Qui confitetur peccata sua et accusat peccata sua, jam cum Deo facit. Accusat Deus peccata tua: si et tu accusas, conjungeris Deo. Quasi duæ res sunt, homo et*



or "*to me the sinful one*;" for as the Pharisee had singled himself out as the most eminent of saints, or indeed as the one holy in the world, so the publican singles himself out as the chief of sinners, the man in whom all sins have met—a characteristic trait! for who at that moment when he is first truly convinced of his sins, thinks any other man's sins can be as great or dreadful as his own?

And he found the mercy which he asked; his prayer like incense ascended unto heaven, a sacrifice of sweet savour, while the prayer of the other was blown back like smoke into his own eyes; for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble;" "*I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.*"\* Not merely was he justified in the secret unsearchable counsels of God, but he "*went down to his house justified,*" with a sweet sense of forgiveness received shed abroad upon his heart; for God's justification of the sinner is indeed a *transitive* act, and passes from Him to its object. The Pharisee meanwhile went down from the temple, his prayer being finished, with the same cold dead heart with which he had gone up. Christ does not mean that one *by comparison with the other* was justified, for there are no degrees in justification, but that he absolutely *was* justified, was contemplated of God as a righteous man,† and the

peccator. Quod audis homo, Deus fecit: quod audis peccator, ipse homo fecit. Dele quod fecisti, ut Deus salvet quod fecit. Oportet ut oderis in te opus tuum, et ames in te opus Dei Cf *Serm.* xxxvi. 11; and *Enarr. in Ps.* lxvi. 5. Of this publican he says (*Enarr. in Ps.* xxxix.): Sibi non parcebat ut ille parceret, se agnoscebat ut ille ignosceret, se puniebat ut ille liberaret.

\* The lectio recepta, *δεδικαιωμένος . . . ἢ ἐκεῖνος*, has not the authority of any single uncial Ms. in its favour. An unauthorized emendation in the Elzevir edition, it has since held its place in the text. The question lies between the readings *ἢ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος*, which has far the greater amount of outward authority in its favour, but is hardly intelligible, and is without any parallel example (Winer, *Gr. Gr.* p. 277), and *παρ' ἐκεῖνον*, which, with less external support, has yet been received, as it seems to me rightly, into the text of the later critical editions. It is probable that ΠΑΡ having by mistake been written ΓΑΡ, the insertion of ἢ and the change of *ἐκεῖνον* into *ἐκεῖνος* followed, as needful to make the words render up any sense at all.

† It is interesting to find the Pauline *δικαιώω* here anticipated by

other was not;\* so that here the words found their fulfilment, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Isai. lvii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 5, 6).† And the whole parable fitly concludes with that weighty saying which had already formed part of another of the Lord's discourses (xiv. 11), and which indeed, from the all-important truth which it contains, might well have been often uttered: "*For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*,"‡ words which supply here a beautiful transition to the bringing of the children to Jesus, the incident next recorded by our Evangelist.

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our Lord, not merely as regards the thing, for that of course, but as regards the very word itself, which, in this sense at least, we are accustomed to attribute exclusively to a somewhat later development of doctrine. As was to be expected, it is in the Evangelist who was St. Paul's companion that we find it.

\* It is a characteristic that this should be denied by nearly all the chief commentators of the Roman church, though in fact this is the very truth which the parable is to teach. Thus Maldonatus: *Non significatur aut publicanum vere justificatum fuisse, aut vere damnatum Phariseum, quanquam ita Euthymius intelligit.* He might have added many more who so understand it; Tertullian, for instance (*Adv. Marc* iv 36), affirms: *Alterum reprobatum, alterum justificatum descendisse*, and Augustine: *Nam superbia in Phariseo de templo damnata descendit, et humilitas in publicano ante Dei oculos approbata ascendit*.

† Augustine says of these two in the parable (*Enarr. in Ps. xciii. 12*): *Ille superbus erat in bonis factis, ille humilis in malis factis. . . Placuit Deo magis humilitas in malis factis, quam superbia in bonis.* These are striking words, yet will not bear any close examination. There may be, and was here, a humilitas post mala facta, but there is no humilitas in malis factis, since in every sin there is a root of deadly pride out of which it grows, a daring of the creature to lift itself up against the Creator; and again, there is no possibility of a superbia in bonis, since they cease to be good, so far as in them this pride mingles.

‡ Augustine: *Videte, fratres, miraculum magnum, altus est Deus; erigis te, et fugit a te; humilias te, et descendit ad te; and of this Pharisee (Enarr. 2<sup>a</sup> in Ps. xxxi. 4): Noluit humiliari confessione iniquitatis suæ; humiliatus est pondere manûs Dei.*

## PARABLE XXX.

### THE POUNDS.

LUKE xix. 11-27.

THE greater part of what might else have been fitly said upon this parable, has been anticipated in that of the Talents. The reasons for affirming this to be, not a different report of the same, but altogether another parable, have been already given. Not to speak of the many and important variations between the two, variations so important that the two accounts can scarcely be records of the same discourse, the parables bear the most decisive marks, each one of its adaptation to the peculiar circumstances under which it is recorded as having been spoken; while, in either case, the other would not fit the time or place at all so well.\* But on this matter it will be needless to repeat, save exceedingly briefly, what has been already said. We are first informed what the motive of the parable was: "*He added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*" It was uttered to repress impatience, to teach the need of a patient waiting for Christ; nor that alone, but also of an active working for Him during the time of his absence. Such was its aim as regarded those who had joined themselves entirely to Him, and had placed themselves to Him in the relation of servants to their Lord and Master. But He had also other hearers on this his last journey to Jerusalem, such as had not indeed thus at-

\* Chrysostom (*In Matth. Hom.* 78) distinctly affirms them to be different: and had not Augustine believed them so, we may confidently assume that in his work *De Cons. Evang.* he would have sought to bring them into harmony.

tached themselves to Him, but a multitude drawn together by wonder, by curiosity, and by other mingled motives. These, though now having a certain good will toward Christ and his doctrine, and though being, so long as they were in his presence, to a considerable degree under his influence, yet not the less were exposed to all the evil influences of their age, and liable to be drawn presently into the mighty stream of hostility which was now running so fiercely and so fast against Him. To this danger they would above all be exposed, when in his own person He was no more among them, when his death had seemed to belie his lofty pretensions. For them is meant that part of the parable (ver. 14, 27) concerning the citizens who hated to have their countryman set over them as their king, and as soon as he had withdrawn from them for a while, sent after him messages, disclaiming him for their lord, but who at his return paid the fearful penalties of their hatred and defiance.

In the great Roman empire, wherein the senate of Rome, and afterwards its emperors, though not kings themselves, yet made and unmade kings, such a circumstance as that which serves for the groundwork of this parable can have been of no unfrequent occurrence. Thus Herod the Great was at first no more than a subordinate officer in Judea,\* and flying to Rome before Antigonus, was there declared by the senate, through the influence of Antonius, king of the Jews. In like manner his son Archelaus had personally to wait upon Augustus, before he inherited the dominions left him by his father; and then did not inherit them as king, but only as ethnarch. History furnishes many other examples, for it was felt over the world, in the striking words of the historian of the Maccabees;—"whom they [the Romans] would help to a kingdom, those reign, and whom again they would, they displace" (1 Macc. viii. 13).—That he who thus seeks and obtains a kingdom was one well born, a "*nobleman*," is only what we should naturally

\* First, procurator (Josephus, *Antt.* xiv. 9, 2); afterwards, *σπαρτηγός* (*Antt.* xiv. 11, 4).

expect, as it would be little likely that any other would lift his hopes so high, or would yield sufficient promise of maintaining himself on his throne, to render the higher authority willing to instal him there. And who was of such noble birth as He who, even according to the flesh, came of earth's first blood,—was the Son of Abraham, the Son of David (Matt. i. 1); who was besides the eternal and only-begotten Son of God?

The kingdom which this nobleman goes to receive can scarcely be, as some understand it, another kingdom, at a distance from the land of his birth; but rather he goes to receive the investiture of that kingdom, whereof before he was only one of the more illustrious citizens, and which after a while he returns to reign over, as its king. Either supposition, it is true, would suit *his* case, whom this nobleman represents: He went to be enthroned in his heavenly state, and in heaven to rule over all as the Son of man (Heb. ii. 7, 8; Phil. ii. 9-11). But it might with equal truth be said that He went to receive solemn investiture of that earthly kingdom which He had purchased with his blood, and which hereafter He shall return and claim as his own, sitting on the throne of his father David; and the circumstances of the narrative evidently point to this as the correcter view of the matter. It was not over strangers, but over his fellow-citizens, that the nobleman departed to solicit a dominion; else would there be no meaning in their message, "*We will not have this man to reign over us*;"—whether that implies, as generally taken, that they, hearing of his purpose, give him notice beforehand that they will yield him no obedience, that however he may receive at other hands the dominion over them, they will not acknowledge his rule, nor own allegiance to him;—or whether, as is more probable, it is a message, or embassy rather, which they send to the court whither he is gone, to anticipate and counter-work him there, to declare how unwelcome his exaltation would be;—"We do not desire that this man should be made our king."\* It was exactly thus that a faction of the

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\* The speaking of him in the third person, "*this man*" (*τοῦτον*).

Jews, in the case of Archelaus, sent ambassadors to the court of Augustus to accuse him there, and if possible to hinder his elevation over them.\* So again we find him on his return exercising kingly functions *among his fellow-citizens*—setting his servants over five cities, and over ten—having power of life and death, and executing extreme judgment on those that had refused to admit his authority. There cannot then be a question but that the kingdom which he goes to receive is that very same of which he was himself originally a citizen.

Before, however, he went, "*he called his ten servants,*" or rather, ten servants of his,† "*and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy‡ till I come.*" The sum is very much smaller than that which, in St. Matthew, the man who was travelling into a far country committed to *his* servants' fidelity.§ This is at once explained by the fact that the other parable was spoken to the Apostles, who of course had received infinitely the largest gifts of any from Christ, while this is spoken to the disciples generally, whose faculties were comparatively fewer. How remarkable this *still* ministry, these occupations of peace in which the servants of the future king should be engaged, and that too while a rebellion was going on. A caviller remarkably enough demands, "Why did he not distribute *weapons* to his servants? Such would have been under the circumstances described the most natural thing

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seems a strong confirmation of this view; and *πρεσβεία* (see Luke xiv. 32) is an embassy rather than a message.

\* Josephus, *Antt.* xvii. 11, 1, *B. J.* xi. 2, 1.

† Besides that the original requires this, it would be absurd to suppose that, with the immense households of antiquity, which, as Seneca says, were *nations* rather than *families* (see BECKER's *Gallus*, vol. i. p. 196), this nobleman, of consequence enough to be raised to a royal dignity, had but ten servants belonging to him.

‡ Or "*employ in trading.*" "*Occupy*" is here a Latinism; thus *occupare pecuniam*, because money in business, or put out to interest, does not lie idle, is *occupied* or employed. So in NORTH's *Plutarch*, p. 629, Phocion refusing Alexander's gift says, "If I should take this sum of money and *occupy it not*, it is as much as I had it not;" cf. *Judg.* xvi. 11.

§ A talent was=243*l.* 15*s.*; a pound (*mina*)=4*l.* 1*s.* 3*d.* (see the *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Antt.* s. v. *Drachma*, p. 360).

to have done." Doubtless *the most natural*, as Peter felt, when he cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest; as all have felt, who have sought to fight the world with its own weapons, and by the wrath of man to work the righteousness of God. Such identifying of the Church with a worldly kingdom has been the idea of the Papacy, such of the Anabaptists. Men in either case feeling strongly that there must be a kingdom of God, have supposed that it was immediately to appear (ver. 11), and that they, and not Christ Himself, were to bring it into this outward form and subsistence; instead of seeing that their part was, with the still and silent occupation of their talent, to lay the rudiments of that kingdom, and so to prepare the world for its outbreking; while yet the outbreking itself should not actually come to pass, till the King Himself returned in his glory.

The Jews were especially Christ's fellow-"*citizens*," for, according to the flesh, He was of the seed of Abraham, a Jew and a member of the Jewish polity; and they hated Him not merely in his life, and unto death; but every persecution of his servants—the stoning of Stephen—the beheading of James—the persecutions of Paul, and all the wrongs which they did to his people for his name's sake, and because they were his, these each and all were messages of defiance sent after Him, implicit declarations upon their part, "*We will not have this man to reign over us.*" And Theophylact well observes, how twice this very declaration found formal utterance from their lips,—once when they cried to Pilate, "We have no king but Cæsar;" and again, when they said, "Write not, The king of the Jews." When we give this parable a wider range, and find the full accomplishment of all which it contains, not at the destruction of Jerusalem, but at the day of judgment,—and it is equally capable of the narrower and the wider interpretation,—then these rebellious citizens will no longer be merely the Jews, but all such evil-men, as by word or deed openly deny their relation and subjection to Jesus, as their Lord and King (in this different from the unfaithful servant, for he allows the relation, and does not openly throw off the

subjection, but yet evades the obligation by the false glosses of his evil heart), and their message will have its full and final fulfilment in the great apostasy of the last days, which shall be even as this is, not an evading merely of the subjection due unto Christ; but a speaking of great things against Him (Rev. xiii. 5, 6; Dan. vii. 25; 2 Thess. ii. 1-10); not merely disobedience but defiance, even such as shall not be content with resisting his decrees, but shall anticipate and challenge Him to the conflict (Ps. ii. 2).

On the following verses (15-23) there is little to say which has not been said in another place. At his return, the nobleman distributes praise and rewards to them that have been faithful to him while he was away,—punishments more or less severe to them who have abused the opportunity and taken advantage of his absence.\* The rewards are *royal*, and this consistently with the royal dignity with which he is now invested; he sets them over cities. In the other parable it is otherwise (Matt. xxv. 14-30); there the master, being but a private man, claims no such power of setting his servants in high places of authority. This is worthy of notice, as an example of the manner in which each parable is in perfect keeping and harmony with itself through all its minor details, which is another reason for believing them originally distinct from one another. The rewards too, as they are kingly, so are they also proportioned to the fidelity of the servants. He whose pound had made five pounds is set over five cities; he whose pound had made ten is set over ten. We hear nothing of the other seven servants but need not therefore conclude that they had wholly lost or wasted the money intrusted to them;† rather that the three who come forward are adduced

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\* This, of course, is borrowed from the life, and is what often must have happened. We may compare the conduct of Alexander, rewarding and punishing after his return from his long Indian expedition, from which so many in Western Asia had believed that he never would come back (see the Bishop of St. David's *Hist. of Greece*, vol. vii. p. 62, seq.).

† Thus Ambrose (*Exp. in Luc.* viii. 95): *De aliis siletur, qui quasi prodigi debitores, quod acceperant, perdiderunt.*



as specimens of classes, and the rest, since all that we are to learn is learned from the three, for brevity's sake are omitted. —“*Those who stood by,*” and were bidden to take his pound from the slothful servant,\* and give it to him that had shown himself the faithfullest, or, at all events, the ablest of all, are clearly the angels, who never fail to appear and take an active part in all scenes descriptive of the final judgment.†

When the king had thus distributed praise and blame, rewards and penalties, to those who stand in the more immediate relations of servants to him, to those of his own household, he proceeds to execute vengeance on his enemies, on all who had openly cast off allegiance to him, and denied that they belonged to his house at all (Prov. xx. 8). At his command they are brought before him, and slain before his face. As their guilt was greater, so their punishment is more

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\* It is characteristic that the *σουδάριον* (sudarium), which, not exerting himself, this idle servant does not need for its proper use (“in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” Gen. iii. 19), he uses for the wrapping up of his pound. That he had it disengaged, and so free to be turned to this purpose, was itself a witness against him.

† Deschaleddin, whom Von Hammer styles the great religious poet of the modern East, has an interesting little poem resting on the same idea as that of the present parable,—namely, that of life, with all its powers and faculties, as a sum of money to be laid out for God. As it is brief, I will subjoin a translation, made, indeed, through the German :

O thou that art arrived in being's land,  
Nor knowest how thy coming here was planned ;  
From the Schah's palace to life's city, thou  
On his affairs wert sent, at his command.  
Thee thy Lord gave, thy faithfulness to prove,  
The sum of life, a capital in hand.  
Hast thou forgotten thine intrusted pound ?  
Stunned with the market's hubbub dost thou stand ?  
Instead of dreaming, up and purchase good,  
Buy precious stones, exchange not gold for sand.  
Thou at the hour of thy return wilt see  
Thy Monarch set, with open book in hand.  
What thou from him receivedst, he will bring  
To strict account, and reckoning will demand :  
And a large blessing, or a curse from him  
Thy faithfulness or sloth will then command.

terrible, than that of the slothful servant. In the Marriage of the King's Son (Matt. xxii. 1) the vengeance on the open enemies goes before that on the hypocritical friend or servant; here it follows after. This slaying of the king's enemies *in his presence*, is not to be in the interpretation mitigated or explained away, as though it belonged merely to the outer shell of the parable, and was only added because such things were done in Eastern courts (1 Sam. x. 27; xi. 12; Jer. lii. 10), and to add an air of truthfulness to the narrative. Rather it belongs also to the innermost kernel of the parable. The words set forth, fearfully indeed, but not so that we need shrink from applying them to the Lord Jesus, his unmitigated wrath against his enemies,—but only *his* enemies exactly as they are enemies of all righteousness,—which shall be revealed in that day when grace shall have come to an end, and judgment without mercy will have begun\* (Rev. xiv. 10). All this found its nearest fulfilment in the overthrow of Jerusalem, and in the terrible calamities which went before and followed it: that was, without doubt, *a* coming of Christ to judgment; but it will find its full accomplishment when the wickedness of an apostate world, having come to a single head, shall in that single head receive its final doom, in the final destruction of Antichrist and his armies.

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\* Augustine often uses this and the parallel passage, Matt. xxii. 13 (as *Con. Adv. Leg. et Proph.* i. 16; *Con. Faust.* xxii. 14, 19), in argument with the Manichæans, who, contrasting the severity of the God of the Old Testament with the lenity of the God of the New, would have proved that they were not, and could not be, one and the same. But, he replies, there is no such contrast. As there is love in the Old Testament, so there is fear, and that which should awaken fear, in the New, and he alleges the terribleness of this doom in proof. The Manichæans could not betake themselves to their ordinary evasion, that the passage was an interpolation or a corruption, as they accepted the parables (see AUGUSTINE, *Con. Faust.* xxxii. 7) for part of the uncorrupted doctrine of Christ.—We may compare Heb. i. 13, “till I make thine enemies *thy footstool*,” and we learn from Josh. x. 24 what the image is, that lies under these words.

## APPENDIX.

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IN a review of an earlier edition of this book, which appeared in THOLUCK's *Literarischer Anzeiger*, 1847, among other blame which tempered a sufficiently favourable notice of it, complaint was made that it did not contain any enumeration of the chief preceding works which had treated the same subject. I had already felt that such an enumeration would be desirable, and on this hint to the same effect from another quarter, I have prepared, by way of appendix, a list including the more important works on the Parables, of which I am aware. The list does not make any attempt at completeness. Indeed, so doing it would defeat its own object as a help to study, embracing as it then must so much of very subordinate worth, or of no worth at all. I have here set down only such works as I know, or have reason to suppose, possess some value. Most, but not all, of those named have come under my own eye.

### I. WORKS INTRODUCTORY TO THE STUDY OF THE PARABLES.

C M PFAFF: *Comment de rectâ Theologiæ parabolicæ et allegoricæ Conformatione.* Tübingæ, 1720.

G. C. STORR: *Dissertatio Hermeneutica de Parabolis Christi.* Tübingæ, 1799. 4. [Opusc. Academ. Tübingæ, 1796, p 89, seq 8]

G. A. VAN LIMBURG BROWER: *De Parabolis Jesu Christi Specimen academicum inaugurale.* Ludg. Batav. 1825. 8.

F. W. RETTBERG: *De Parabolis Jesu Christi.* Gottingæ, 1827. 4

A. H. A. SCHUIZE: *De Parabolarum Jesu Christi indole poeticâ Commentatio.* Gottingæ, 1827. 4.

A. F. UNGER: *De Parabolarum Jesu naturâ, interpretatione, usu Scholæ exegeticæ rhetoricæ.* Lipsiæ, 1828. 8.

### II. WORKS ON THE PARABLES IN GENERAL.

A. SALMERON: *Sermones in Parabolas Evangelicas.* Antverpiæ, 1600. 4.

B. KEACH: *Gospel Mysteries unveiled, or an Exposition of all the Parables.* London, 1701. Fol.

F. BRAGGE : Practical Discourses on the Parables of our Blessed Saviour. London, 1704. 2 voll. 8.

C. VITRINGA : Schriftmässige Erklärung der Evangelischen Parabeln. Franckfurt und Leipzig, 1717. 4.

S. BOURN : Discourses on some select Parables of our Saviour. London, 1763. 2 voll. 8.

J. L. EWALD : Betrachtungen über die Gleichnisse unsers Herrn Leipsic, 1786. 8.

W. DODD : Discourses on the Miracles and Parables of Christ. 2nd edit. 1809. 8.

A. GRAY : A Delineation of the Parables of our Blessed Saviour. 2nd edit. Edinburgh, 1814. 8.

B. BAILEY : Exposition of the Parables of our Lord. London, 1828. 8.

F. G. LISCO . Die Parabeln Jesu exegetisch-homiletisch bearbeitet. Berlin, 1831. 8.

E. GRESWELL . Exposition of the Parables and of other parts of the Gospels. London, 1839. 6 voll. 8.

DE VALENTI . Die Parabeln der Herrn für Kirche, Schule und Haus erklärt. Basel, 1841. 8.

### III. WORKS ON PARTICULAR PARABLES.

#### *The Seven Parables in Matthew xiii*

J. F. REUSS . Meletema de Sensu septem Parabolarum Matth. xiii prophetico. Haun. 1733. 4.

#### *The Sower.*

TAYLOR . The Parable of the Sower and of the Seed. In five Sermons. 1634. 4.

JORDANS . De Nativâ Verbi Divini Efficaciâ ad loc. Luc. viii. 4-15. Vitembergæ, 1746. 4.

S. STENNET : On the Parable of the Sower. 1786. 12.

E. HARWOOD : On the Parable of the Sower. London, 1776. 12.

G. MUIR . The Parable of the Sower illustrated and applied. London, 1769. 8.

#### *The Tares.*

P. HEYLIN : The Parable of the Tares expounded and applied. London, 1659. 4.

G. MUIR : The Parable of the Tares, in twenty-one Sermons. Paisley, 1771. 8.

#### *The Labourers in the Vineyard.*

J. L. MOSHEIM : Meditatio in Parabolam de Operariis in Vineâ. Duisburgi, 1724. 4.

A. H. FAUST: *In Parabolam de Operariis in Vineâ Cogitationes.* Helmstadii, 1725. 4.

F. S. LÖFFLER: *Explanatio Parabolæ de Operariis in Vineâ.* Lipsiæ, 1726. 4.

F. A. ZULICH: *Meditatio ad Parabolam de Operariis in Vineâ.* Jenæ, 1741. 1.

J. R. KIESLING: *Dissert. philolog. de Procuratore in Vineâ Domini ad illustrandum Evang. Matth. xx 8.* Lipsiæ, 1740.

J. H. SCHRAMM. *Dissert. de Operariis in Vineâ.* Jenæ, 1775. 4.

*The Marriage of the King's Son.*

H. V. BECKER: *Meditationes de Veste Nuptiali.* Rostoch, 1775. 4.

*The Ten Virgins*

T. JOHNSTON: *Christ's Watchword, being the Parable of the Virgins expounded.* London, 1630. 4.

T. SHEPHARD: *The Parable of the Ten Virgins opened and applied.* 1695. Fol.

T. BEVERLEY: *The Parable of the Ten Virgins, with an Apology for the hope of the Kingdom of Christ appearing within the approaching year 1697.* London, 1697. 4.

J. G. RAU: *Quo consilio Jesus Christus Parabolam de decem Virgibus proposuerit, auquiritur.* Erlangæ, 1798. 4.

*The Prodigal Son*

R. H. [R. HENDERSON]: *Arraignment of the Creature at the bar of Religion, Reason, and Experience, an Explanation of the historie and misterie of the Prodigal Son.* 1631. 4.

O. GREW: *Meditations upon the Prodigal Son.* London, 1684. 4.

T. GOODMAN. *The Penitent Pardoned, or the Parable of the Prodigal Son.* 8th edit. London, 1724. 8.

*The Unjust Steward.*

J. C. SCHREITER: *Historico-Critica Explicationum Parabolæ de Improbo Œconomo Descriptio.* Lipsiæ, 1803. 8.

D. L. BERTHOLDT. *Comment. quâ nova Parabolæ de Œconomo Injusto Interpretatio tentatur.* Erlangæ, 1814. 4.

D. SCHULZ: *Ueber die Parabel vom Verwalter, ein Versuch.* Breslau, 1821. 8.

C. G. L. GROSSMANN: *Comment. Historico-Exegetica de Procuratore, Parabolâ Christi ex re provinciali Romanorum illustratâ.* Lipsiæ, 1823. 4.

C. W. NIEDNER: De loco Commentar. Lucæ xvi. 1-13 Dissertatio. Lipsiæ, 1823. 4.

F. C. GELPKE: Novum tentamen Parabolam Jesu de Œconomio Injusto interpretandi. Lipsiæ, 1829. 8.

H. L. HARTMANN: Comment.\* de Œconomio Improbo apud Luc. xvi. 1-13. Lipsiæ, 1830. 8.

*The Rich Man and Lazarus.*

H. TEELMAN: Comment. Crit. et Theolog. in cap. xvi. Evang. Lucæ. Amstel. 1695. 4.

T. CRUSO. Discourses on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. London, 1697. 8.

A. L. KÖNIGSMAN: Dissert. de Divite Epulone immiseriæ non accusato Kilon. 1708. 4.

J. L. FRÖREISEN. Dissert. de infelici Divitis felicitate. Giss. 1714. 4.

G. SOMMELIUS: Dissert. in narrationem de Divite Epulone et Lazaro Lund 1768. 4.

C. G. KLINCKHARDT: Super Parabolâ J. C. de Homine Divite et Lazaro Comment Exegetico-practica Lipsiæ, 1831. 4.

*The Pounds*

F. I. CREMER: Dissert. de diverso Exitu ac Mercede Servorum fidelium atque ignavorum, Luc. xix. 11-27. Harder 1751. 4.

THE END.

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